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Florence Powell,
with her aunt Anne's most affectionate regards
Christmas, 1871

LADY OF LIMITED INCOME.

A Tale of English Country Life.

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

"Never her house or humble state torment her;
Less she would like, if less her God had sent her;
And when she dies, green turf and grassy tomb content her."
PHINEAS FLETCHER.—*The Purple Island.*

"Altrui vile negletta, a me sì cara,
Che non bramo tesor, nè real verga."
TASSO.—*La Gerusalemme Liberata Canto Settimo.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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THE LADY OF LIMITED INCOME.

CHAPTER I.

MISS BEAUMORICE CASTS UP HER ACCOUNTS.

“If happy, then it is in this intent,
That having small, yet do I not complain
Of want, nor wish for more it to augment,
But make myself with what I have content.”

SPENSER. *Faery Queen*, book iv., canto 9.

T was always Miss Beaumorice's custom to wind up her accounts on the last night of the year. She was but a lady of limited income, but as her habits were regular, and her desires moderate, she had always contrived to make both ends meet, and keep a small

sum untouched in the county bank for a rainy day.

So this annual winding up was rather a luxury when it came round ; which it would not and could not have been had she not been methodical. She kept her accounts from day to day, and from week to week ; first entering every expense as it occurred in her pocket-book, and then writing out each week's expenses on the Saturday. And another plan of hers was to pay for everything in ready money, as far as practicable —her butcher, baker, and grocer, every week, her rent and wages every quarter, to the day. So that if she had died suddenly at any time, nobody would have been the worse, except for the loss of a good tenant, a good mistress, a good customer, and a good friend.

On the last evening of the year in question, then, Miss Beaumorice, being alone and at leisure, was seated at her pretty

davenport with her account-book before her. The first three quarters of the year having been already summed up, there only remained to add the last quarter to them ; and lo ! when she had done so there appeared a deficiency !

I am not going to say how much it was, because you might either pooh-pooh it, or say, “ What a shame ! She ought to have minded what she was about.” Her income was probably smaller than yours, so you may fix on what you would consider rather an annoying deficiency in your own case, and suppose hers to have been a little under that amount.

It took her by surprise, and vexed her. She was not insolvent, but she had gone beyond the mark ; and the question was, in what particular ?

“ All phenomena,” says the *Times*, “ are the results of an almost infinite variety of causes ; but in no case can the causes be

traced so far back as in the case of a deficiency. The inquirer may attribute it to almost any one of the events of the last century.”

“ Ay, ay ?” say you. “ How can that be ?”

Well, without concerning ourselves to know how the Chancellor of the Exchequer has sometimes made it out with respect to the national budget, we may follow Miss Beaumorice in her endeavours to trace her much less important deficit. That she had given freely had undoubtedly something to do with it; and any items *exclusive* of charities, to that amount, which she might have spared might be considered the items she *ought* to have spared.

Say, for instance, her doctor’s bill. If she had not sent for the doctor she would not have had the bill; but without him she might have died; but yet she might not. But if she had not been ill she need

not have had him, and she would not have been ill if she had not caught cold that very wet day in London. How came she to catch cold ? By denying herself a cab and walking through the rain. Why did she deny herself a cab ? Because she thought the expense might be spared, and hoped the rain would not hurt her. Why did she go out at all that wet day ? Because she wanted her dividends. Why did she want her dividend without delay ? Because otherwise she must have drawn money from the county bank. You see by this time how one might trace back to one thing after another.

While Miss Beaumorice was leaning back in her chair, immersed in not altogether pleasant cogitations, the tinkle of St. Thaddeus's bell suddenly roused her from her reverie, and reminded her that, for the first time in that district, a Church service was to close the old year and usher in the new

one. She had heard and read of the Methodists' watch-nights, and of the Moravians ushering in the new year with sound of trumpets, and she felt greatly impelled to obey the call of this little bell of St. Thaddeus. So she wrapped herself up warmly, and, accompanied by one of her maids, stepped out into the cold, clear starlight, and proceeded briskly along the white, hard-frozen road.

“Are *you* going to church too?” said a cheerful friend coming up to her. “I’m so glad! I hope it will be well attended. How glorious Orion is to-night! Look at Charles’s Wain.”

Talking all the way to church the distance seemed but half its length.

How pretty St. Thaddeus looked, with the light streaming through the lancet windows! There was not a full attendance, for the novelty of the service induced many to remain snugly toasting themselves

by their fires who might very well have turned out ; but there were sundry cheerful girls who had persuaded their brothers to accompany them, sundry resolute matrons who had exacted their husbands' companionship ; so that what with young men and maidens, old men, lone widows, and school-children, the church was about half full. It was well warmed, and a fine, invisible web of Christian fellowship seemed to connect them all together in bonds of sympathy : the prayers were hearty, the responses were hearty, the singing was hearty. And then the incumbent, Mr. Nuneham, gave a short stirring sermon that went straight from his own heart to the hearts of his hearers.

“ There are advantages,” he said, “ attending the public worship of the church which are peculiarly felt on an occasion like this. Sobering thoughts, not untinged with melancholy, are naturally called forth

by the consciousness that another year is just departing beyond recall, and a new year is about to open on us, fraught with we know not what startling or saddening events. Who of us can read the history of the coming year ? The happier it finds us, the more we have to lose. Even if we stood alone in the world, and wrapped the cloak of selfishness around us, and retreated from the threatened miseries of others into the narrow citadel of our own bosoms, we should be unable to resist the impulses of sadness ; but as it is, surrounded by the closest and dearest ties, it is agony to feel that though at this moment we may be free from any pressing trouble on their account, the next may snatch our happiness away, and we may be left lonely and desolate. I confess for my own part, my friends" (and he was a family man who spoke), " that I should be absolutely miserable when I reflect on this, but for

the practical support which religion gives the soul ; and reasonable and reassuring is it, therefore, for us thus to collect together, thoughtfully to reconsider the difficulties and dangers of the past year, from which no foresight of our own could have spared us, the mercies and blessings accorded which no power of ours could have attained, and thankfully to entrust our future to the same loving Father who has led us thus far on our journey ; honestly and faithfully intending and promising to follow His guidance, He deigning to continue our helper.”

This is enough for a sample. It need only be added that the little handful of people left the church strengthened and cheered onward, and that Miss Beaumorice said within herself,—

“ Lonely I may be, but wrapped in the cloak of selfishness I will *not* be—God being my helper.”

The joyous bells were still ringing out in honour of the birthday of the new year, as if it needs must bring better gifts and fewer troubles than the last. Every English tower and steeple joined in that glad acclaim, and yet those thankful notes were not heard from one to another, for many of them were far apart, and seemed to the ringers alone in their melody—just as the prayers of the faithful seem to themselves solitary, when in fact they will go up together like the morning and evening incense of the old dispensation, “which is the prayers of the saints.”



CHAPTER II.

MISS BEAUMORICE STILL SEEKS MORE ADDICTED TO GIVING THAN SAVING.

“ And what her charity impairs
She saves by prudence in affairs.”

NEW Year’s day ! Who can resist keeping this day as the Jews kept the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same—making them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor ? But how and if you are poor yourself ? Why, *take* your gifts and be thankful.

“ It is all very well,” thought Miss

Beaumorice, on waking, “to talk about the extravagance of Noureddin of Balsora, and laugh at his catch-word—‘It is a gift!’—but, after all, he was a much more agreeable fellow than that greedy Baba Abdalla, who never knew when he had enough; and for my part, I would a thousand times rather have had Noureddin’s misfortunes than those of the blind beggar, who asked Haroun Alraschid to give him a box on the ears. Though extremes should be avoided, of course.”

And she smiled as she thought of the agreeable surprise she had prepared for her maids, of two bright new silver thimbles. But what was her own surprise when she saw they had been beforehand with her, and placed on her toilet a pretty pin-cushion of spotted muslin over pink, with little flower tumbler in the centre, ticketed “From Jessy and Alice, wishing dear Miss Beaumorice a happy new year.”

“The good girls!” exclaimed she, quite audibly, though softly; and a tear shot into her eye, for in the night she had lain awake, thinking over her affairs, and that detested deficiency had taken advantage of loneliness, darkness, and silence, to rear itself up in ridiculously exaggerated proportions, till she had felt quite cowed by it.

“I can go into lodgings,” thought she; “I can limit myself to one servant. I had, indeed, hoped to keep Jessy till she was married, by which time Alice would be quite equal to a single-handed place, but no suitor seems to turn up, and perhaps Jessy is destined, like her mistress, to a single life. I never would stand in the way of a servant’s respectably settling herself, as all my girls have known in their turn; but Jessy’s turn has not come yet, and perhaps may not, though I can’t think where the young men’s eyes are, for there is not a

prettier, pleasanter-looking girl in Lambs-croft. Poor Jessy ! that would be a natural way of parting with her, and I could keep on with Alice without taking another. But perhaps a different course is laid out for us. Well, what must be must !”

And now here was this little offering, which really, considering the circumstances of the donors, was quite touching. Sweet and serious thoughts took possession of her mind, and as she dressed she repeated to herself the New Year’s hymn, beginning,—

“I come, my Lord, to offer up to Thee
A worthless but a willing offering :
A heart where only evil I can see,
Yet not, for that, refuse the gift I bring.
Oh deign to accept it—cast each evil out,
And make it pure and new within, without.

“I come, my Lord, to offer up to Thee
The brief remainder of life’s fleeting span ;
Whate’er I have or am Thine own shall be ;
Without Thee I will form no wish or plan.
Time, talent, influence, actions, thoughts and words,
All—all be unreservedly my Lord’s.”

Idle words!—worse than idle, if uttered without sincere intention of fulfilment. But she did intend it, though in a vague, undefined way.

On her breakfast-table, oh! what a heap of letters! good wishes of the season. Some from scattered members of her family, some on engraved cards—invitations to subscribe to charitable societies in want of funds—to a volunteer corps in want of colours—to a church in want of a steeple—to help a decayed gentlewoman to support a large family.

“How am I to do it, who am a decayed gentlewoman barely able to support a small one? Why need a church have a steeple? Why need volunteers have colours? Ah, I *should* like to subscribe to this orphan asylum. Two bills? when I don’t owe a penny! Why, now, this is too bad of Marriott to send in this account again, when I have his receipt

on the file. This other, for a riding-whip and walking-cane, is of course a mistake, or a very stupid joke. Who can this be from?" (opening another envelope). "Alured Ward, I declare!"

This Alured Ward was the son of an English physician in a foreign court; his mother, who was dead, had been Miss Beaumorice's early friend, she had therefore a very tender feeling towards this youth, whom she had never seen, nor as yet communicated with by letter, and she therefore with lively interest read the following lines:—

" Dec. 30, 186.—

" DEAR MISS BEAUMORICE,—

Will you, in consideration of my being my mother's son, forgive this impertinent intrusion? My father charged me to make acquaintance with you, and if you

will give me leave, I will run down to you from Saturday to Monday. I hope this will not inconvenience you very much, but there is time to write and tell me if it is so. I have been cramming pretty hard lately for my pass examination, and have rather overdone it, but I am very anxious not to get plucked, for my father's sake as well as my own. Hoping soon to see you, (I'll come by the five-thirty) and wishing you the compliments of the season, I am, dear Miss Beaumorice, faithfully yours,

“ARTHUR ALURED WARD.”

It was not much of a note, but she was exceedingly pleased with it. A smile stole over her face.

“How very *à propos*,” thought she, “that I have asked Mary to come down. If anything comes of it it will not be *my* doing—I have not brought them together. Things

must take their chance. Stay; here is a line from Mary."

It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR MISS BEAUMORICE,—

“It will be of trivial moment to you, but is an extreme disappointment to me, that I cannot leave home at present. Let me hope that you will kindly give me some future opportunity of coming to you. Wishing you many very happy years, believe me, my dear Miss Beaumorice, your affectionate young friend,

“MARY BEAUFORT.”

“No, Mary, I won’t believe it; you are a very tiresome child. If there is anything I hate, it is people disappointing me when I ask them to come, and proposing to come when I don’t ask them.”

So she wrote Mary rather a dry answer, and then wrote Alured a very pleasant one, begging him to come and stay as

long as he could. By the time she had concluded this genial composition she was disposed to forgive Mary for what, after all, she could not help ; so she burnt her note to her, and wrote a second full of kindness.

All the while she was penning these letters she was worried by the music of a hand-organ playing outside the house.

“ What nuisances those organ-boys are ! ” thought she ; “ I make it a principle not to encourage them, much as they are to be pitied for being mere tools in the hands of designing speculators.”

Yet, shortly afterwards, as she was carrying her letters to the post, and saw, to her surprise, that the organ-player was not a boy, but a girl of twelve or thirteen, looking very worn and wan, she was touched with pity, and gave her a penny. The little girl’s large dark eyes instantly brightened as she said,—

“Grazie, signora !”

“That organ is too heavy for you,” said Miss Beaumorice, stopping short. “Have you been in England long ?”

With a very foreign accent the little girl replied,—

“Two year, my lady.”

“Where do you come from ?”

“Genoa, my lady.”

“Are you an orphan ?”

“My father dead, my lady.” And she looked sad.

The little girl was not exactly pretty, her long straight nose was too large, and her skin very pallid, and not over-clean ; but she reminded Miss Beaumorice of a very noble type of beauty, and, what was of more importance in her estimation, had a good, intelligent brow, expressive eyes, and a mouth betokening a sweet disposition.

“Are you happy ?” said she.

“ Ah, no, not happy.” And the little girl’s eyes filled with tears.

“ Are you kindly treated ?”

“ The lady will excuse me ; I have very little English.”

“ I think you speak English very nicely. What is your name ?”

“ Rosina, my lady.”

“ Rosina is a very pretty name. Who takes care of you ?”

“ My mother, my lady.”

“ Oh ! you have a mother, have you ? Where is she ?”

“ In the town, my lady.”

“ Humph ! Well, Rosina, I wish I could put you into a better way of life. Suppose your mother comes to speak to me to-morrow morning. I live in that white house.”

“ Sì, signora.”

“ And here is sixpence for you for having taken up your time. I should like to talk to you a little longer, but I am in a hurry

just now. Be a good girl, Rosina, whatever you do. You know what being good is—be a good girl."

"Oh yes, my lady!" (and there were tears in her eyes), "I *will* be good—I don't do nothing bad."

As Miss Beaumorice pursued her way she thought, "I am sure there is good in that child—perhaps the making of a good and noble character; but how little I had to say to her! What's the use of being able to read Tasso and Manzoni and Silvio Pellico, if the right words don't come at the right moment? A few Italian phrases would have unlocked her heart. Happy the people who can make their acquirements available, and say just the right thing at the right time."

Italy, its wrongs and its rights, its shortcomings and its aspirations, occupied Miss Beaumorice's thoughts most of the way to the post-office. Afterwards she looked in

on Miss Partridge, who had accompanied her to church the previous evening. Miss Partridge was a governess of superior attainments, who had overworked herself in a too arduous situation, and was now availing herself of the Christmas holidays to recruit her health in country lodgings. Her attack was chiefly on the nerves ; and though, in a general way, quiet is the best panacea for that complaint, yet, to a naturally active, mind, quiet and cessation of employment sometimes prove the worst of torments. Miss Partridge could usually get through the day pretty well if she were able to have a little exercise in the open air ; but she had taken cold overnight, and fancied herself obliged in common prudence to keep the house, where she unfortunately was overtaken by a fit of low spirits. Nothing could be more propitious for her, then, than this visit from Miss Beaumorice, who began by hearing of all her complaints,

and ended by making her forget them. She even persuaded her that it would not hurt her to take an early cup of tea with her ; and they had a quietly cheerful evening together.

Rosina came next morning with red eyes to say her mother was very ill and unable to leave her bed. Miss Beaumorice immediately thought that she might have weakly yielded to sentiment in this case, and was being imposed upon. To satisfy herself whether it were so, she made the little girl take her to the low lodging-house where her mother was lying, and by the way made use of such Italian as she could muster, to ask her several searching questions. Directly Rosina found herself addressed in her own language, her countenance cleared in a wonderful manner, and she began to speak a great deal too rapidly in Italian for Miss Beaumorice to follow her ; but yet she obtained a general idea of her story, a sad

one, and felt her kindly impressions revive.

The low lodging-house to which they were going, in spite of having once been a mansion of importance, was now a mere nest of tramps. Outside, it was picturesque with post and pillar work, and had mottos and armorial devices ; inside, the wide, shallow oaken staircase, with heavy carved banisters like Horace Walpole's at Strawberry Hill, had great apertures ready to trip up the unwary, with fowls perched on the handrails that fluttered off with a screeching cry as they passed.

It was so dark that Miss Beaumorice groped and stumbled after her light-footed guide, till she opened a creaking door at the head of the stairs. The room was of noble proportions, but the atmosphere was so close as to be quite sickening, and it did not seem to have known a scrubbing-brush and pail of water since the days of its

old glories. A group of shabby women, gathered about the sick bed, looked round, and some with instinctive respect curtseyed to Miss Beaumorice as she entered, while others regarded her with a hard stare.

“We can’t understand a word she says,” said one of them.

“Let me try,” said Miss Beaumorice, gently; and stooping over the poor woman, she spoke a few words in Italian—perhaps only “*Come state?*”* but few as they were, they fell like music on the poor creature’s ear. She was evidently very ill, nay, dying, and she asked for a priest. Miss Beaumorice told her there was not one within reach, but then with a great effort calling to mind the Italian version of the Lord’s Prayer, she slowly and reverently repeated it, and the poor woman’s face became tranquillized. She murmured something about “*La mia figlia,*” and Miss Beau-

* How are you ?

morice gathered that her chief anxiety was about her child. She said,—

“ Be at ease about her. I will do for her what I can.”

A look of joy lighted up the mother’s face: the next instant she was racked with pain; and the parish doctor’s assistant coming in, pronounced it a case of organic disease, and said life could not be prolonged many hours. In fact, the poor woman died soon afterwards, much soothed by Miss Beaumorice’s ministrations; her burial devolved on the parish, and was conducted with almost as much celerity as it would have been in her own land. The orphan Rosina must either go to the workhouse, trudge to London on foot with her organ at her back, or receive temporary shelter from Miss Beaumorice. She took her home with her, and spoke thus to her maids:—

“ Jessy and Alice, I never find you wanting in kindness. This poor little girl has

lost her mother and is friendless. She will not be here long, for I shall soon put her in proper charge ; but meanwhile we will clean her and dress her and be kind to her. You know who said, ‘I was a stranger, and ye took me in.’”

This was quite enough. The good girls took Rosina away, to have due washing and brushing, while Miss Beaumorice from her stores of mended and ready-made garments produced a complete suit of clothes in which, at prayer-time, she made her appearance neatly dressed.

Earlier in the evening Miss Beaumorice wrote to the secretary of a London missionary society, begging him to put her in communication with one of the missionaries to the Italians in London.

This was on the Thursday ; on the Saturday she received not a letter but a visit from Signor Emmanuele Bonomi, who in his outward man was exactly her *beau ideal*

of *il re galant'-uomo*, only with a beard instead of a moustache.

This excellent man had originally been educated for the priesthood, but had been withdrawn from the Romish faith by the perusal of the Bible. To escape the Inquisition he fled to England, where the only method of support that immediately presented itself was teaching his own language. Means of usefulness, however, occurred among his poorer countrymen in London, and the object he constantly kept in view was the welfare of his beloved Italy. Finding himself one day beside the dying bed of a poor artist, who was about to leave his little girl destitute in a land of strangers, Signor Bonomi soothed his last moments by promising to adopt her, and he took the little girl home to his wife, in faith that means would be afforded them for her support. That very day he received five shillings anonymously, as an earnest of

a supply which ever after, from one quarter or another, flowed in sufficient for his exigencies. He had long desired to train female teachers for Italy, in the belief that her day of regeneration was at hand, and he added one little orphan after another to his home, till nineteen Italian girls were in Protestant training, and fitted by their accomplishments for superior governesses and schoolmistresses, just as the opening for them occurred.

Such was the outline of the history of the brisk, cheerful-looking man who now called on Miss Beaumorice. She had just prevailed on Miss Partridge, who had looked in on her, to remain and partake of her early dinner, for a friend had sent her a hare and a brace of pheasants, and Miss Beaumorice was strong in the consciousness of having a better entertainment in store than usual. Alured would not come till the evening, but one of the pheasants

would not keep, and there was still another in reserve for him, besides the hare; so what could be more fortunate for the lady of limited income than her having it in her power to invite friends on the spur of the moment to a repast she might be modestly proud of?

But first she must hear what her distinguished-looking visitor had to say; and as she took a lively interest in the spiritual and social progress of Italy, she was eager to hear the latest news from an authentic source. Soon her visitor, finding himself with sympathizers, was giving animated details; but though he could tell of the circulation of twenty thousand Bibles, in a land hitherto closed against the Scriptures, and of twenty three thousand pupils in the elementary schools of the ex-kingdom of Naples, where the people had hitherto been systematically debarred from instruction, he owned that not many rich, not many noble,

were yet called from darkness into light. It was chiefly among the artisan class, as in the days of the apostles, that the word of the Lord grew and prevailed.

He checked himself in the midst of this interesting subject to inquire about the little girl, concerning whom Miss Beaumorice had written. She rang for Rosina, who came in, looking very sad, but neat and clean. She underwent a long examination from him, and was then sent back to the kitchen. Signor Bonomi observed that she seemed so utterly without relations or natural guardians that it would be a work of charity to put her in the way of some respectable livelihood, and at the same time of religious instruction. He was already empowered by his wife to state her concurrence in any arrangement he should make for undertaking her charge on the quarterly payment of a very moderate sum; and our lady of limited income, on hearing it named, at

once decided to advance it, at whatever cost of her own convenience. She would not let such an opportunity be lost.

“It would not do,” Signor Bonomi observed, “to try to rescue all the little organ boys and girls from their precarious life, unless with an express vocation for such a service; but because one could not save all, was no reason for not saving one.”

And his eyes kindled as he told how means had always flowed in to him from one source or another, ever since he began his life of faith.

“Life is not given us for mere elegant and intellectual recreation, signora. On every side of us how much work there is to be done! A true genius always finds new subjects for his pen or pencil, and the benevolent need never be long in search for a new vocation.”

This was so completely Miss Beaumorice’s own opinion, that she gave it her cordial

approval, and then it was that, Signor Bonomi rising to take leave just as the clock struck one, she, strong in the consciousness of being able to dispense ox-tail soup and pheasant, pressed him to lunch at her early dinner with such frank cordiality, that he, being a hungry man, gladly complied.

Then, it need hardly be said, ensued the feast of reason and the flow of soul, for they had a most comfortable chat on Italian literature, and he quoted some beautiful verses which were new to them, by Giovanni Prati, a modern poet, who has successfully grafted the romantic ballad on the poetical literature of his country. They were “Lines written to the Order of King Charles Albert, in 1843 ;” and after reciting them *con spirito*, he added with a smile, “they have had the honour of being prohibited.”

“Dear me !” exclaimed Miss Beaumorice

when he had gone, taking Rosina with him, “I feel as if I could work my fingers to the bone to help such a man as that ; don’t you ?”

“Yes, I think I do,” said Miss Partridge.

“Don’t let us content ourselves with mere feelings then.”

“But what can I do ? I have so little money.”

“But you have plenty of talent, and you know he said some ladies were going to hold a bazaar for the benefit of the mission. Let us work for it.”

Agreed.



CHAPTER III.

MISS BEAUMORICE'S EXCUSE FOR HER APPARENTLY RECKLESS COURSE.

“She finds in that fair deed a sacred joy,
That will not perish, and that cannot cloy.”

Crabbe.

HITHERTO we have not seen any symptoms of retrenchment on Miss Beaumorice's part; on the contrary, she appears launching out into expenses which, call them by what name you will, she cannot afford. But let me whisper a word in the candid reader's ear. When Miss Beaumorice wrote to the society's secretary, she knew perfectly well that she was booking herself for a contribu-

tion of some sort towards Rosina's expenses. She also knew that she had predestined a certain sum to the purchase of a new dress and bonnet ; but these she, at a word and at the moment, gave up decisively, definitely, not to hanker for them afterwards, but having looked the sacrifice well in the face and accepted it, to make it and think no more of it. And this is self-denial.

Well, Signor Bonomi and Rosina were gone ; Miss Partridge was gone ; she had sped the parting guests, and had now to welcome the coming one. But the "five-thirty" and the "six-thirty" trains came in, and the tiresome fellow did not arrive. What ? had she prepared custards, and mince pies, and aired her best bed-linen, and given out her best plate and table-linen, and rummaged out a boot-jack and hat-brush, and ordered beef and Bath chap and anchovy paste and herrings for a

youngster who was going to disappoint her? It was too bad of him.

One thing was clear, he could not come now, if he came at all, till supper-time. She must have tea without him; and she looked askance at the hot buttered cake that she had ordered for his benefit.

“This reminds me,” thought she as she was about to sweeten her tea, “I forgot to order sugar. I doubt if there is enough to last till Monday. There is enough for one, but not for two. Then why should not *he* be the one? and why should I drink sugar any more? Excellent! here is retrenchment the first.”

The complacence occasioned by this resolution actually sweetened her tea to that degree, that no amount of saccharine matter could have sweetened it better. Pleased with herself, she concluded her slight repast, took another survey of the guest-chamber, and then sat down before a

good fire to enjoy a book. A book, to be enjoyed, let me tell you, must not be cursorily read. “Reading without purpose,” says Lord Lytton, “is sauntering, not exercise. More is got from one book on which the thought settles for a definite end in knowledge, than from libraries skimmed over by a wandering eye. A cottage flower gives honey to the bee, a king’s garden none to the butterfly.”

Miss Beaumorice’s book may have been “Caxtoniana,” or it may have been “Friends in Council,” or it may have been something else ; but, whatever it was, she came presently to the following sentence in it :—

“Count St. Florentin, minister of Louis the Fifteenth, remarked that a geometrical balance in taxes diminishes their weight.”

“Dear me !” thought she, “what is a geometrical balance ? Could I apply it to my accounts ? Would it really diminish their weight ? Their apparent weight, I

suppose he meant. I must get some geometricalian to explain it to me. I wonder whether Alured studies geometry? He is cramming, I know, but I have not the least idea in what way. I wonder whether he is clever or stupid—spoilt or unspoilt—pleasant or not, like his father or like his mother? I shall soon know; that is, if he comes, but perhaps he won't. Young people have no notion how they annoy elder people by unpunctuality and non-performance of engagements. They contract these faults quite unconcernedly; but they would not if they viewed things and persons in their just proportions."

Between reading and musing the time sped away, till Miss Beaumorice was literally startled by a loud peal of the house-bell, followed by a stir in the hall, a quick, firm, masculine step, and the sound of a masculine voice. Miss Beaumorice hastened to welcome the newly arrived, and as

she opened the door the light fell full on the bright face of a very tall lath of a young man, who extended his hand to meet hers as he gaily said,—

“I haven’t kept you waiting, I hope?”
Oh the wretch!—

“If to his share some human errors fall,
Look in his face, and you’ll forget them all.”

Louisa’s face!—his mother’s dark blue eyes, slightly aquiline nose, and dimple in the left cheek. Miss Beaumorice’s heart was his at first sight—he was the child of her early friend!

And what a good-natured, sweet-tempered fellow! what a breath of youth and life and hopefulness accompanied him into the room and hung about him like a halo! Oh, there was no mistake about Alured; no guile in his composition: he might not be very deep; he was unmistakably very pleasant; frank, droll, artless,—just the

youth one would like for a nephew or a younger brother.

And what a talker! Miss Beaumorice need not have troubled herself to think how she should entertain him. He entertained *her*, and brought his own entertainment with him. A sympathetic auditor or two,—that was all Alured wanted. If young and pretty, all the better,—if not, never mind.

“And how old are you, Alured? I suppose I may call you so.”

“Yes, ma’am, by all means. I shall be of age in ten months.”

“In other words, you have just turned twenty.”

“If you prefer those other words.”

“And so you are going into the army.”

“If I pass.”

“Oh, surely there’s no doubt of that?”

“ Well, they do ask a fellow such a lot of hard questions.”

“ Oh, but that is all for your good, and the advantage of your profession.”

“ What can it signify to a man in actual service whether he knows how many square miles there are in Poland ?”

“ Oh, but that’s easily learnt.”

“ Perhaps when you’ve learnt it they don’t ask you about it, but ask what’s the extent of the French Empire.”

“ That’s according !”

“ Ah, but that wouldn’t do. I should like to try it on, though ! That’s according to the Emperor’s mind. Shouldn’t I get a black look !”

“ Do you study geometry ?”

“ Oh, well, not much.”

“ Can you tell me how a geometrical balance in taxes diminishes their weight ?”

“ Why, you’re worse than the examiners,” said he, bursting out laughing.

“No, to be sure I can’t. Why, what a question to floor a poor fellow ! Why, are *you* a geometrician ?”

“No indeed,” said she, laughing. “I only picked up the phrase just now in a book, and wanted to understand it.”

“Ah, well, you must ask somebody with a longer head than mine. I can’t go into those things. Somehow, when I get my tutor to explain them, his explanations are no explanations at all. I want things made clearer to me. I don’t believe I’m very deep. Sometimes I think I shan’t pass.”

And here he gave a great sigh.

“When is the examination to come on ?”

“In March.”

“Oh, that is a good way off. You have plenty of time before you, if you do but make use of it.”

“I’m afraid I shan’t make use of it.

Not to good purpose, you know. I'm sure I sit for hours over my books, and only get into a muddle. There are fellows up in that sort of thing, who tie wet towels round their heads."

"Yes, but I advise you not to follow that plan."

"Those wet towel men come to grief sometimes, I know."

"Indeed they do, and sometimes bring on palsy of the brain. There is a point, beyond which it is of no good to force the intellect -- the mind becomes exhausted, and the student's end is defeated. Regular study at stated hours, and not unduly prolonged, will produce greater results than unremitting labour. The human machine cannot bear it."

"Indeed, Miss Beaumorice, I am sure you are right ; I wonder you should know so much about it."

"Oh, I read, and I see."

“ You might add, ‘ And I think.’ ”

After this he told her of the training he was undergoing.

“ Don’t be alarmed if you hear some unaccountable noises in my room when I’m at my exercises.”

“ What, on Sunday mornings ?”

“ Well, no, not to-morrow morning. But on Monday you may think I’m going to bring the house down.”

“ If you do, I shall expect you to set it up again. Are you sure that such violent exercise is good for you ? You don’t look very strong.”

“ Oh yes, I am—only I’ve shot up rather fast. I could lift you up to the ceiling with ease on my locked hands. Shall I ?”

“ No, thank you, I think we might be better employed.”

“ I’m stronger than I look, though ; and pretty good at running and hopping. I suppose you haven’t a shower-bath ?”

“Why, yes, I have ; but it is in my room, not yours.”

Chatting in this desultory fashion during supper and after it, they did not part till the old clock on the stairs struck eleven. Miss Beaumorice mused a good deal as she undressed, and after she was in bed. What early memories he recalled ! Many of his little ways were exactly Louisa’s ; and the inflections of his voice sometimes were the echoes of hers. Miss Beaumorice was sorry to think he looked consumptive. His eyes were unnaturally bright, his cheeks thin, though brilliantly coloured ; the blue veins were traceable on his transparent forehead.

“Poor fellow !” thought she, “he seems so full of heart and hope ! It will be sad indeed if he should be early cut off.”

After what he had said, with a little brag, of his early rising, she was rather

surprised next morning at his being late for breakfast.

“ Well,” said Alured, by way of excuse, “ you know you prohibited my exercising, so I thought I might as well indulge a little ; and as there was a bookshelf in my room, I took a book and had a nice spell of it in bed.”

“ Pray, what was the book ?”

He looked rather ashamed, and said, “ Oh, that is too bad !”

“ Nay, I did not mean to embarrass you. I know there are no objectionable books in the room, and only was interested in knowing what had interested *you*.”

He would not say, however ; and she then accused him of having selected a novel.

“ I really forget the name of it,” said he, “ and what it was about. I do indeed.”

“ Oh, then, in fact, you took a book and fell asleep again instead of reading it.”

“It may have been so—I believe it was. I think it was a cookery book, with plates of joints and directions how to carve them, —‘Fix your fork in the centre of the breast ; slice it down in the lines *a b*,’ and so on. And so I thought how I should like a slice from *a* to *b*.”

“Well, I think you were as well sleeping as reading such stuff as that. Will you help yourself to some Bath chap ?”

“Will you let me help you from *a* to *b* ?”

After breakfast he turned over in a cursory way the various Sunday books which Miss Beaumorice had dispersed about with considerable art, on the principle of cobwebs to catch flies, all of them being more or less alluring. He seemed much more inclined, however, to talk than to read, and presently asked her if she had read “The Pentateuch Exposed.”

“No,” said she, “I should think it waste of time.”

“Should you?” said Alured. “Well, now, I should like to see what the writer has to say for himself.”

“When I have read all the good books, it will be time enough to begin the bad ones.”

Alured laughed, and seemed to think this a good idea.

“That’s just such an answer,” said he, “as I should like to be able to make to fellows sometimes, when they propose something they know I shan’t like.”

“You should cultivate readiness. A smart answer sometimes stands us in better stead than a wise one.”

“Yes, only I’m never ready. I’m like Athelstan the Unready.”

“Readiness may be cultivated.”

“Why should you call the ‘Exposition’ a bad book?”

“Oh, I don’t think it would interest you if I were to go fully into it.”

“Isn’t it a good thing, then,” said he quickly, “for a fellow to know what to say when he hears another praising it?”

“Indeed it is, Alured. Tell me now, you who are young,—so many years younger than I am, have not you some strong ideas on the subject of friendship?”

“Well, I believe I have: I suppose every one has.”

“I have, for one, I assure you. I love my friends very strongly, and cannot bear to hear them attacked or depreciated; can you?”

“No, certainly not.”

“I suppose we may readily admit our Saviour to be the best and greatest of friends to us, whatever we may be to Him.”

“Yes, certainly,” said Alured, gravely.

“Now, as it would undoubtedly repel me to hear any one misrepresenting and detracting from an earthly friend, it does

so in a much greater degree to hear him do so with regard to our Lord. Jesus spoke truth. He called Himself *the truth*; we believe and are sure that falsehood never passed His lips. He tells us the Scripture cannot be broken. The author of 'The Pentateuch Exposed' thinks that it can. He affects to distinguish between what is and what is not inspired. We read that *all* Scripture is given by inspiration. And by the term Scripture used by our Lord and His apostles is meant the Old Testament, beginning with the five books of Moses; our Lord constantly quoted and appealed to them. He ascribes to them the authority of a law. He made belief in Moses a test of belief or unbelief. 'For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me.' 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'"

"I see——"

The bells began to ring for church.

“What a nice talk we have had!” said Alured. “I like going into things this way.”



CHAPTER IV.

MISS BEAUMORICE UNDERTAKES WHAT SHE
DID NOT BARGAIN FOR.

“When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou !”

Sir Walter Scott.

NIIGHT closed on a peaceful, cheerful, profitable Sabbath. Miss Beaumorice had had a great deal less reading than usual, but an immense amount of talking ; and though it had been very desultory, and sometimes lightened by pleasantries, many a forcible truth had been spoken, many an old fact shown in a new and striking light. She thankfully

laid her head on her pillow and yielded to dreamless sleep.

How long she had slept she knew not, but she was awakened while it was yet dark, except for the faint light of her night-mortar, by an extraordinary pulsation or thrilling of her bed.

“An earthquake!” thought she; “how singular! how awful! And yet I don’t feel in the least afraid.” It ceased, and then recurred. This time she *was* alarmed, whatever she might tell herself to the contrary. “We may as well all be together,” thought she, ringing the night-bell smartly for her maids. Down came Jessy, with her gown slipped over her night dress, and her bare feet slipped into her shoes.

“Did you ring, ma’am?” said she, “I’m afraid you are ill.”

“No, I am not, but a most extraordinary—— There it is again!” said she, excitedly, and springing from her bed.

“Whatever is Mr. Ward a doing of in his room?” said Jessy, as the china and glass rattled.

“Mr. Ward! It can’t be him in the middle of the night?”

“It’s close upon five, ma’am, the clock’s warning now. I can hear him stamping.”

“Tiresome fellow! at his exercises, I suppose,” muttered Miss Beaumorice, disgusted at her unnecessary fright. “You may go to bed for another hour, Jessy.”

At breakfast time, she said to her visitor,—

“What *were* you doing between four and five o’clock this morning?”

“Oh, you heard me, did you?” said Alured, rather consciously.

“Heard you? yes, and felt you too! I really thought it was an earthquake. Do tell me what you were about.”

“Why, first I was slapping my left shoulder with my right hand, and then my

right shoulder with my left hand. After that, I had forty hops. Perhaps that was the earthquake. Then I put sixpence on the floor and sat down with my back to it, and leant backwards to pick up the sixpence in my mouth ; only the chair fell over and so did I."

"But, in the dark ?"

"Oh no, I had matches."

"What could make you do such things at such an unaccountable time ?"

"Oh, I thought, as I was late yesterday, I'd be early to-day."

"But you were not in time for breakfast."

"No, I turned in again after half an hour's dumb-belling."

"I'm afraid these exercises must be too violent for you."

"Not at all. Oh no. You don't know what strength there is in me."

"At what time must I lose you to-day ?"

“Well,” said he, hesitatingly, “do you want me to go ?”

“I? certainly not, if you can stay !”

“I can stay till to-morrow—that is, if you don’t mind my exercising ; but even the loss of one day, in training, is felt.”

“Oh, you are welcome to exercise, as long as you don’t hurt yourself. I am only afraid of your overdoing it.”

“Never fear ; there’s no danger. I have been so long debarred from female society, that you can’t think how acceptable a little of it is.”

“A lady of my age cannot hope to make her society very agreeable to a young man——”

“Oh yes, indeed ! I like it of all things——”

“I wish I could give you a little variety.”

“What sort of variety ?”

“A few young people, for instance, to come in in the evening.”

“That would be famous. If I might suggest those pretty girls in the pork-pie hats——”

“Pretty girls? I am at a loss to think who you can mean.”

“You nodded to them yesterday. The young ladies in pilot-coats and cravats——”

“Oh, the Miss Gambiers? They are no favourites of mine——”

“Why not?” said he with interest.

“They are hardly lady-like, hardly feminine; their dress, for instance, is ‘the very bush or sign hanging out, which tells that a vain mind lodges within’——”

“Well, it is rather loud, perhaps——”

“No, if I invite some young people, it will not be the Miss Gambiers, though I do not wish to be hard upon them, for they have not had many advantages. We will call upon some model young ladies by and

by. Meanwhile I must attend for a little while to my house affairs."

"And I to my exercising."

For this purpose he betook himself into the leafless garden, where a young lad named Hodge was piling faggots; and presently Alured was to be seen playing leap-frog with him and flying over his head. After this they contrived a leaping bar, which Hodge put higher and higher, and Miss Beaumorice, viewing the proceedings through the store closet window, thought of the bystanders in "*The Grasshopper and the Cricket*," who

"Admired the monstrous leaps he made,
And one and all pronounced him mad."

She was blanching almonds, a pretty piece of female housewifery which the most delicate fingers may perform unharmed.

"He's a nice creature," thought she, "but how sadly behind-hand! I'm afraid he won't pass. To think of his

knowing nothing about the Congress of Vienna, or the battle of Borodino. If his mother had lived to bring him up, it would have been very different. His heart is certainly in the right place ; how affectionately he spoke of her, though he was quite a child when she died ; and with what interest he listened to my recollections of her. There he goes again ! now he stands still to cough. I wish he would not cough so violently ; he has a nasty little hacking cough, I observe, at all times, and now this piercing easterly wind has irritated his throat."

Miss Beaumorice having blanched her almonds proceeded to split them, and then stick them all over the surface of a sponge cake, soaked in wine, like the quills of a hedge-hog.

" There !" she thought, " when the custard is poured in, that will make a pretty little centre-dish ; I will have some Normandy pippins, and a mould of Oswego at

the sides, and a few sandwiches. There will be eight of us—quite as many as I shall like to have.”

Then it suddenly occurred to her that it was Twelfth-night, and that she would have a Twelfth-cake of modest dimensions on the tea-table.

“ Because I cannot afford a large one,” thought she, “ is no reason why I should not have a small one. I like keeping up old customs, and very likely we shall be as merry as many a party with a five-guinea cake.”

And she thought with pleasure of the Twelfth-night parties of her childhood and youth. Leaving the store-room she gave a parting glance through the window, and observed Hodge standing idly leaning against the leaping pole (which was a clothes prop), in a pensive attitude, as a knight might lean on his lance; but Alured had disappeared. She remembered hearing the garden door slam, and concluded he had

come in. Going into the parlour she saw him lying on the sofa.

“I’ve done it once too often,” said he, piteously, as he looked at her without rising. “Look here,” and he held towards her his handkerchief.

“Oh, my dear Alured, have you broken a blood vessel? I must send at once for Mr. Finch——”

“Yes, I think you’d better; but don’t frighten yourself,” said he, in a subdued voice, as she darted out of the room. He himself looked frightened enough; and every minute of her absence seemed like ten.

“Eat this,” said she, coming back almost directly to him, with a sliced lemon, slightly sweetened with sifted sugar.

“Oh, I can’t touch anything.”

“But indeed this will do you good; it is a styptic, and I have no other in the house. Do take it, my dear Alured——” and she put her hand on his shoulder.

He did so reluctantly.

“This is a bad job,” said he, making an effort to smile. “I can’t think how I could be so foolish. I had done the same thing hundreds of times without hurting myself.”

“I think you had better not talk much till Mr. Finch sees you. He will soon be here—Jessy ran off directly.”

They sat a few minutes in perfect silence.

“If anything should happen,” said he, presently, “you’ll tell my father——”

“Oh yes, of course; but you need not think over all the most dismal things in the world. You will get over this in a little while, I dare say, only you will have to be prudent, and not do those violent exercises, or go out in cold winds——”

“I may as well shut up shop, then, at once——” He tried to say it jocularly, but his eyes filled with tears. So did hers, though she put a brave face on it.

“ Pooh, pooh,” said she, “ you will never do for a soldier if you lose heart——”

“ Lose heart, Miss Beaumorice ? Why, very likely the doctors won’t pass me !”

And his tears *would* burst forth—his frame shook with suppressed sobs.

“ Alured, Alured ; you really *must* not ! You will bring on your cough again, my dear boy ; and then who can tell the consequence ?”

She was right ; he did bring on his cough again, and she stood by him trembling, and offering him water.

“ There, there, now lie down and keep quite quiet till Mr. Finch comes. Keep your mind easy, think of something else, if you can ; think of something pleasant.”

Knowing it next to impossible he could follow her advice, and nearly at her wit’s end, she sat down beside him, held one of his cold hands in both hers, looked at him

with the utmost compassion, and presently in the gentlest manner, repeated,—

Let not thy heart despond and say,
'How shall I meet the trying day?'
He hath ordained by sure decree
That as thy day thy strength shall be.

"Oh that it may be so!" exclaimed he, squeezing her hand, but without opening his eyes.

At this unpropitious moment the visitor's bell rang, and Miss Beaumorice, hearing a female voice instead of Mr. Finch's, released Alured's hand, saying,—

"Never mind — nobody shall come in here—"

And went out into the little hall, closing the door after her. The visitor was Miss Partridge, who came to return the *Athenaeum*; and Miss Beaumorice drawing her into the other sitting-room, told her what had happened, adding that she

had sent for Mr. Finch, and was momentarily expecting him.

“Mr. Finch! why, he is gone on his morning round! I saw him go by half an hour ago,” said Miss Partridge. “He will probably not return till one o’clock.” Then, noticing Miss Beaumorice’s distressed look, “The best thing Mr. Ward can take,” said she, “is twenty drops of diluted sulphuric acid in a wine-glassful of water, and, if you will allow me, I will go and get it for him. I have often given it to my mother.”

Miss Beaumorice gratefully accepted the offer, and Miss Partridge hastened away, full of real interest for the patient, and pleased to be of service. Miss Beaumorice meanwhile returned to him.

“The visitor was a very kind lady,” said she, “who told me she had seen Mr. Finch start on his morning round, so that he is not likely to be here just yet; but she has suggested a very efficacious, and not at all

disagreeable remedy, and has gone to fetch it; so I hope you will not hurt her by objecting to try it. It only tastes like lemonade."

"Oh, then it can't be very bad," said Alured; adding, with emphasis, "Women are capital creatures. You never fail us at a pinch."

Miss Beaumorice's heart swelled. She again pressed his hand, and then a pause ensued, till Miss Partridge came back with the sulphuric acid, ready dropped into water. She administered it to him herself, and spoke so calmly and cheerfully, that Miss Beaumorice felt she had a great ally in her.

"I shall not stay now," said Miss Partridge, after remaining a few minutes, "but I will call by-and-by to hear Mr. Finch's report; and if there is any way in which I can be serviceable, by sitting with you, reading to you, or, in short, any way of being

useful, you may command me. Don't say a word, pray—there's no need. We all understand one another."

What a pleasant feeling exists, even in our heaviest hours, when that is the case! Alured, suddenly laid low in the midst of his superabundant activity, and with his dearest hopes at stake, was sensible of a sweetness in the consoling words and good offices of these kind-hearted women, whom he had never even seen two days ago, that his gay unthinking hours had never known.

"It will not be so very bad, after all, to be laid up in dry dock this cold weather," said he, "if it does not put you to great inconvenience."

"Do not think of it. I shall be most glad to do anything I can for you. As you say, a short confinement will be no such very great grievance, and I dare say you will soon be about again."

“Ah, but suppose I should not!—” and he looked at her wistfully.

“It is all in God’s hands,” she replied, “and you would not wish it otherwise, would you?”

“N—o—”

“He can lay us low; and He can raise us up again. He knows what is best for us; what little checks—sometimes great ones—we occasionally need. If we take the little checks sweetly, it may be that He will remit greater ones; because He sees that the lesser have sufficed to work the very good He designed.”

“Then, if I bear this little casualty rightly,” said Alured, anxiously, “perhaps I may get well and pass, after all.”

“You may,” said she, gravely. “We won’t call it a casualty. It has been the result of the too violent exercise you used, being unaware of the danger you ran. And God may permit it to lead to some good end.”

He lay quietly thinking, till Mr. Finch arrived, sooner than Miss Beaumorice had expected. Mr. Finch quite approved of Miss Partridge's practice: after due investigations and inquiries, he thought the case sufficiently serious for Mr. Ward to remain recumbent for the present, subject to medical treatment, and restricted to almost silence and very low diet.

So here was Miss Beaumorice booked for an indoor patient for an indefinite time to come! She was unfeignedly grieved that the accident had occurred in consequence of Alured's visit to her; but, since he was to be ill, she rejoiced that it should be under the eye of his mother's friend, rather than that the poor lad should be lying, lonely and uncheered, in solitary lodgings.

As for Alured himself, Mr. Finch had made him clearly comprehend the necessity of his implicit submission to treatment. He accepted his painful position; and,

directly he had done so, began to reap his reward in the peace of mind that ensued. Thenceforth there could not be a better patient ; he lay hour after hour on the sofa without complaining of tedium, or crept from one room to another with the deliberation of an old man ; never voluntarily giving the least trouble, and winning the affection of every one who came near him by his patience and sweet temper.



CHAPTER V.

MISS BEAUMORICE'S TWELFTH NIGHT.

“ In the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.”

MISS PARTRIDGE came to tea, and played chess with Alured all the evening, sitting on a low stool, and placing the chess-board between them on a music-stool ; and thus quietly passed Twelfth Night, which was to have witnessed such festivity. There was nobody to taste the hedgehog-cake but Miss Beaumorice and Miss Partridge, for Alured was restricted to lemonade and a biscuit ;

but he bore it very well, and thanked them for contriving him a happy evening. He had only spoken monosyllables, and in whispers, for he was thoroughly frightened at his condition, and had substantial reasons for wishing not to retard his recovery ; but Miss Partridge from time to time had quietly told little anecdotes about her father, who had served in India and died in the Crimea, and some of them were humorous, and others interesting, in a professional way, to one who desired to be a soldier.

As for Miss Partridge herself, her age was thirty-four ; and as her hair, of a sandy tint, was rather thin, and she had light eyes and eyelashes, she could not be called pretty, though she had pretty hands. But her voice was in some degree a compensation for her looks, for it was unusually sweet and expressive, both in speaking, reading, and singing. She was not only an accomplished musician, but well up in

history and all the ologies ; versed in modern languages, and farther advanced than Alured in Euclid. Happily he only discovered her attainments by degrees, or he would have been quite afraid of her.

Miss Beaumorice was thirteen years older than Miss Partridge, and very nice-looking ; rather under the middle height, plump, clear brown, with a good colour, hazel eyes, and black hair ; and pretty little, fat, dimpled, white hands. Counting her, as of course he did, for an old lady, Alured thought her much favoured by nature.

“ I suppose,” said Alured, while waiting for Miss Partridge’s next move, “ I must write and tell my governor about this ? ”

“ Let us wait a day or two,” suggested Miss Beaumorice.

“ Yes,—so best,” said he, with a relieved air. “ He’ll be having me over there if he thinks I’m shelved.”

“ Does your father live abroad ?” inquired Miss Partridge.

“ Yes ; in a worm-eaten old castle, with thirty-six bedrooms.”

“ O dear ;” exclaimed Miss Partridge.

“ You must not talk, Alured,” said Miss Beaumorice, gently.

“ No, I know I mustn’t. Can’t you read us something ””

“ What, while you are playing chess ?”

“ I’ve mated Miss Partridge again, and I would not be so rude a third time.”

“ Oh, do read, Miss Beaumorice,” said Miss Partridge, taking out her crochet.

“ Well, what shall it be ?”

“ Shakspeare’s Twelfth Night, since this is Twelfth Night,” said Alured.

“ Well, I will just read a little bit, here and there.”

So she began with, “ Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live by thy tabor ?” “ No, sir, I live by the church :”

but then turned back to the famous dialogue between the duke and Viola, and therewith ended her reading.

When she thought over the day's events on her pillow, she could not help marvelling, or admiring, as the old phrase goes, at the varied human interests already intertwined with hers, thus early in the year, that threatened to be so lifeless and dull. She thought of her early life, and of Alured's father, Waldegrave Ward, as he used to be called. Waldegrave Ward had been a frequent guest at her father's table when Dr. Beaumorice was a thriving physician in full practice, and Waldegrave had hardly any. Waldegrave Ward had been a fine, personable young man, not thinking too little of himself, and thought a good deal of by some others—Miss Beaumorice among the rest. He detected and fostered her liking till it grew into love ; and was on the brink of proposing to her, when, very for-

tunately, as he would have told you, Louisa Davison with £10,000 to her tocher, appeared on the scene, and his feelings experienced a revulsion, and he was very glad that he had not committed himself, or troubled Miss Beaumorice's peace. He *had* troubled it, but she did not show it, and had at least the consolation, a great one, of believing her secret unknown. And she thoroughly approved his choice, though she did not, in her heart, find him guiltless of going too far with her, in all seriousness, before his affections changed their object.

Louisa was a very sweet creature, worthy of love, and destined to an early grave. But long before her untimely death took place, Miss Beaumorice's heart had been taught its lesson ; nor did it ever throb at the chance of being once more wooed, and perhaps won. That pleasant dream had gone by ; the painful lesson had been learnt, and learnt so well that it had

ceased to be painful. In process of time she could look back on it almost as on the experience of another person ; but with distinct remembrance of the old heart-swellings and fruitless tears. Yet no, not fruitless ; such experiences we may suppose are never wasted on the soil of an honest and good heart. And now she had been reading to Waldegrave's son those words that can never cease to be beautiful and touching,—

“ *Viola.* Aye, but I know,—

Duke. What dost thou know ?

Viola. Too well what love women to men may owe.

My father had a daughter loved a man

As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,

I should your lordship.

Duke. And what's her history ?

Viola. A blank, my lord.”

But instead of sitting like patience on a monument, how much more wisely had Miss Beaumorice bestirred herself till she could be a genial, profitable woman, really

able to smile at grief, except in the case of others, or coming to her in the guise of domestic bereavements.

As for Dr. Waldegrave Ward, who did not make that way in his profession which fond friends had augured, he took occasion on his wife's death to go to a German watering - place to recover his spirits ; where, by good fortune, he was instrumental in saving the very indifferently spent life of a petty sovereign prince—a duke, or elector of Hohen Bogen—or some such name—who, prizing it at his own value, thought he could not reward his preserver too highly, or do better for his own safety than by securing him permanently as his physician extraordinary. Thenceforth Dr. Waldegrave Ward basked in the sunshine of court favour, and by no means ill-deserved it.

Had Miss Beaumorice indulged any fond hopes of his endeavouring to renew his old

ascendancy over her, those hopes would have been disappointed; for about eighteen months after Louisa's death, he married a German countess of considerable landed property, and possessor of the old castle, with thirty-six bedrooms, of which Alured had spoken. The countess became the mother of half-a-dozen children, much younger, of course, than Alured, and viewed by him with no favourable eye. According to his report of them, Hermann, Ernst, Adolf, Gertrude, Lenore, and Conrad, were—

“Children rude as bears,
Always tumbling down the stairs,”

or falling out of windows. He wished his father would have a governess for them.

He himself had fortunately been sent to a good English school, and spent his holidays alternately in Germany, and with his maternal relations. It seemed curious

that he should not be with them now—that his father, after so many years of seeming oblivion, should have sent him to Miss Beaumorice. She was touched and pleased at the tardy remembrance.

When Mr. Finch came the next morning, he brought his stethoscope. The result of his examination was satisfactory ; he did not think Alured's lungs seriously affected, and believed that with care he might recover, and be as well as ever.

“ But mind I say, ‘ *with care*,’ ” repeated he. “ If you don’t take care, but, neglecting this cough, go standing about in this piercing east wind, or trying your chest with all manner of unfair exercises—it may be wonderful training, but you’ll soon be in your coffin !”

“ Where I’ve no wish to be, sir, thank you,” said Alured, “ so I’ll take your good advice. You think, then, I’d better not return immediately to my quarters ?”

“ Certainly not at present.”

“ Then I must write to my old tutor and tell him not to expect me.”

“ There’s no harm, you know, in your carrying on your studies here, on the sofa. They will help to amuse you.”

Alured made a face.

“ You have robbed my captivity of its greatest solace—idling, and being petted by the ladies !”

“ Why, I thought you were preparing for a pass examination ?”

“ So I am, sir.”

“ Why, then I should say the best thing is *to prepare.*”

Afterwards, when Miss Partridge called and heard his dismal account of things, she laughed, and said,—

“ I dare say I could simplify matters for you. Tell me what you have to prepare.”

When he had told her, she made light of it, and said,—

“Why, I could stand such an examination as that. In fact, I prepared my younger brother for his, and, if you like, I'll do as much for you.”

“Oh do, for goodness' sake!” exclaimed he, brightening.

So, to it they went; for she declared this amateur governessing was no fatigue to her at all; it was far greater relaxation and amusement than inaction. And, whatever her secret might be, her success was extraordinary; she got Alured through his difficulties at railroad pace. And the best of it was, she made him really like work, now that he saw his way through it, and made him ashamed of aiming to shirk any of it—“so unworthy the spirit of an Englishman,” she said. Half she taught him was *viva voce*—she talked to him, made him explain himself, shewed him how shallow his reasonings were, pointed out his inaccuracies and inelegancies with such drol-

lery that she made him laugh at himself. Also she read to him a good deal ; and Miss Beaumorice enjoyed it too, without binding herself to hear all of it.

“I think,” said Miss Partridge, “this is very pleasant mental exercise, by way of change. I shall be sorry to go back to Lady Fanny and Lady Mary.”

“I’m sure I shall be sorry when you do,” said Alured. “Don’t you remember,” continued he, gratefully addressing Miss Beaumorice, “your saying to me, that day, when I was in such a horrid fright about the doctors not passing me, that perhaps some good would come out of it that we did not see? Well, some good *has* come out of it : good that I consider well purchased at the price of this illness.”

The price of this illness—who was going to pay the doctor’s bill? The lady of Limited Income? Probably he would send it in, immediately after his farewell visit ;

but if he did not—Well, it could not be a very heavy one.

This state of things lasted nearly three weeks. Miss Partridge's holiday had then expired, and she returned to London. Alured was now pronounced convalescent, and Mr. Finch took leave of him, giving sundry monitions to which Alured promised to attend. Soon afterwards a little note was brought to him.

“Oh, his account,” said Alured, after opening it. “What a good thing he thought of it, for *I* didn't! A jolly good figure, too.”

“Well now,” said Miss Beaumorice, to whom he held it out, “I call it moderate. We are very glad to have doctors when we are in pain or in danger; we should not be ungrateful to them directly we get well.”

“No, but—do you know, Miss Beaumorice, I have not quite so much money as this down here, and I must have a little to

carry me home. Shall I write to my tutor about it, or will you lend it to me? I'll tell him when I get back."

"I'll lend it you, and you can remit it to me in half notes, in two following posts."

"Thank you! I will, then. I'll be sure not to forget. Out of debt, out of danger; and now that I'm out of danger, I don't want to go away in Mr. Doctor's debt. I'll be sure to remember my debt to *you*." That's as hereafter may happen.



CHAPTER VI.

IMPECUNIOSITY.

“When will you pay me ?
Said the bells of the Old Bailey.”

MISS BEAUMORICE indulged Alured with a little party before he went away, and even invited the young ladies who wore the pork-pie hats. She hoped he would prefer the milder attractions of the Miss Nunehams, but he declared he liked the Miss Gambiers very much.

When he was gone, how empty the house seemed ! She had begged him to write to her from time to time, and he did so di-

rectly he reached Woolwich, but only to tell her of his safe arrival, and to thank her warmly for her kindness. No money enclosed; she thought it would come the next day. But it did not, nor for many a day after that. She thought it a pity young people should be so negligent of petty duties; and remembered a saying of Miss Edgeworth's, that relations would oftener continue friends, if in matters of business they were as methodical as strangers.

Now then, must begin that rigid system of economy on geometrical principles which was to cover that horrid deficiency. Not a step had yet been taken towards it, except leaving off sugar; should she leave off puddings? Reckon a little pudding at eightpence or ninepence, it hardly seemed worth while to strike it off the domestic bill of fare, and then more meat would be eaten. *Would* more meat be eaten? Does any-

body eat less meat because he intends to have pudding? These sordid questions were considered once and again.

Coals. She could discontinue her bedroom fire, now that the cold was not quite so severe ; only, if she caught cold thereby, she might lay herself up, and be obliged to have Mr. Finch. There were little bills coming in too, as little bills will come in after Christmas, even in the best regulated families. Her stock of wine and ale was getting low, but as she seldom tasted either herself, and was not in immediate expectation of visitors, that could stand over.

Enter Jessy. “Please, ma’am, do you want the piano tuned?”

“No,” said Miss Beaumorice with decision, though she knew it was too flat ; so the old tuner lost his five shillings.

“That tiresome boy has not brought the *Times* yet.”

This was a continual grievance, and Miss Beaumorice had more than once told him that if he persisted in bringing it too late to suit her convenience, she would discontinue taking it in. So here was a good opportunity of putting her threat in execution. It was true she desired to see the daily list of "hatches, matches, and despatches," and the foreign intelligence, and the state of the nation, and what the Queen was doing, and what new books were coming out, and a good many things besides ; but it consumed a great deal of time, and, on the whole, her time might perhaps be better employed. So she would tell the boy not to bring the paper any more, and if she found she missed it very much, she would borrow it of some friend.

Again the post came in without a letter from Alured. She began to fear he had had a relapse, and was too ill to write ;

and under this impression, she wrote him a few lines of kind inquiry.

Her maiden meditations were not fancy-free this evening, by reason of a tall, lathy young gentleman continually figuring in them. She speculated much on his future ; doubted if it would be a brilliant one ; at length, took up a book—not a story-book (which, however, is sometimes a panacea for worry), but one of those that counsel and comfort, from which one can take, as it were, a lozenge to suck, and then shut it up again. She opened on this homely passage,—

“ There are few things for which I have more reason to thank my Saviour, than for the power He has given me of combining high thoughts with humble doings. This power to unite noble and devotional contemplations with constant attention to the numerous cares and toils and trifles and nursings of my little family, is a great de-

light to me. It unites into harmony the extremes of existence—the intellectual and the sensible, the lofty and the mean, the cares of the present and the prospects of the eternal. The things themselves are very remote; strong exercises of the intellect and the habitual contemplation of heaven, and a minute regard to bread and tea, firing and candles. Yet no reason can be given why a person should not try to be a tender and diligent nurse, a prudent and frugal housekeeper, and all the time an intellectual and elevated Christian."

This was Miss Beaumorice's mental lozenge, and it quite allayed the little irritation.

Happening to say, next day, to her neighbour Mrs. Hyde, "How dear coals are now!" Mrs. Hyde replied, "Do you burn Inland or Wallsend?"

"Oh, Wallsend," said Miss Beaumorice with decision. "I always find the best

things answer best. Wallsend, at twenty-nine shillings, now, a ton."

"Well, I got dissatisfied with my Wallsend coals," said Mrs. Hyde. "Actually with the coals, not the price; so I went and complained of them to Blackstone, and asked if he had no other sort. He raised his eyebrows, and said in a slighting sort of way, 'Oh, we've the Inland, of course.' 'Very well,' I said, 'I'll try the Inland.' And I find they burn better, and are four shillings a ton cheaper."

"That is a valuable piece of information," said Miss Beaumorice. "Do they burn bright?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps they burn faster?"

"No."

"Well, I will try them at any rate."

Which she did; and liked them well enough to continue them.

Meanwhile, the morning post brought

two letters. The first, in a dainty little tight-packed envelope, directed by Mary Beaufort. "That will keep," thought she, as her eye caught Alured's rather scrawly superscription on the larger letter. She hastily opened it, and read as follows :

"Woolwich, February 17.

"MY DEAR MISS BEAUMORICE,—

"You will have seen the poor countess's death in the *Times*. (No, I have not!—that comes from discontinuing it!) It was not inserted till I came back, so it only appeared yesterday; you must have thought it strange I did not send you the note which I now enclose, but you know I have not the best of heads, and the day after my first letter to you, my ideas were completely scattered by a hasty summons to Schloss Gütenfeld on account of my step-mother's death. Idalia wrote the note—by-the-bye, you don't know who the

Countess Idalia is ; she is a very nice girl, orphan niece of my step-mother, Countess Verena, and brought up at the castle. Countess Verena was her guardian, but papa—my father, is so now. She (Idalia I mean) got papa's consent for her to write to me since he would not, because he had nobody to be with him and comfort him, and she did not know how to ; so of course I bundled my traps together, told my tutor how the case stood, and started off. There had been lying in state and so forth, but the funeral was over before I got there, which I was glad of—on my own account, you know, but of course I was sorry not to be there to support my father. It's a sad loss. She had been as well as could be, up to that very day, and at supper-time got the core of an apple into her wind-pipe, and choked in spite of all they could do to save her. Was not it shocking ? It was the least little mite of core

you can conceive, my father showed it me ; he got it out afterwards, but it was then too late ; life quite extinct. He felt it very much, of course, and I really did not know what in the world to do. I had not a word to say ; could not think of a consolation to offer ; we sat and smoked and said very little. Had you or Miss Partridge been there, you would have known exactly what was proper. I think he liked hearing me tell about my visit to you as much as anything. He told me to write to you the first thing when I got back (which I am doing) and enclose you the money. I can't think how he'll get along without the countess ; she was a very managing woman. And yet, somehow, she never managed the children ; I am sure she could have done so if she would (being such a manager you know), but now they'll be worse than ever. Idalia and I used to talk

about it as we sat on the battlements, looking over the Rhine. I advised her to try her hand at it, but she would not. She said she should not have time for one thing ; for she did not suppose she would remain at the Schloss now. She's too old, rather, for school ; and my father wishes she were a Catholic, because then he would put her in a convent ; but she is a Lutheran, which I am glad of. Papa says the Romish religion is a comfortable one for some things ; you can have masses for the dead, and so forth ; only, if the dead are none the better for them, where's the good ? only money wasted, *I* think. You must not think my father likely to be a pervert ; he only dropped the idea. We talked it over in a quiet way, that really we need not distress ourselves about the poor countess, for she had done nothing very wrong that we ever heard of, only

was rather imperative sometimes ; and she might have been more so with advantage as far as the children were concerned. Only think, on the very day of the funeral, Adolf must go and pitch himself headlong down the lower dungeon stairs ! He'll make away with himself some day down the oubliette, I expect, a sheer fall of a hundred and fifty feet into the Rhine. I advised my father to send them all to a good boarding school, but he says he is too fond of them ; he must have time to think about it. Poor man, I did not at all like leaving him ; the Schloss is so dismal now. Idalia said it would be dreadful when I was gone. I must now make up for lost time and get into training again. Oh, by-the-bye, I nearly forgot to inclose you a few lines from papa. He is very grateful to you for your kindness to me, and I'm sure so am I ; and to Miss Partridge

too. Please remember me to her very kindly.

“ Believe me,

“ My dear Miss Beaumorice,

“ Very faithfully and

“ Affectionately yours,

“ ARTHUR ALURED WARD.”

A note to her from Waldegrave Ward ? Miss Beaumorice’s hands trembled a little as she opened it, with a strange rush of old remembrances. His handwriting was a good deal altered ; it was now somewhat foreign and flourishing. He said—

“ MY DEAR MISS BEAUMORICE,—

“ It is under painful circumstances that I write. You will have learnt from Alured and the papers my sad loss. I am completely unhinged at present, but cannot let my boy return to good old England without a line of heartfelt thanks to you,

my early and valued friend, for your motherly care of him during his late stay with you. *Entre nous*, the less said of his little accident to others the better. His lungs are quite sound, and I believe it to have been merely a little effusion from the head. I have told him to make no allusion to it at Woolwich ; and as he may be a little contrary on this point, having some very *young* ideas, I shall be obliged by your adding your powerful influence to mine. And now adieu ; have you ever thought, do you ever think of your old friend on the banks of the Rhine ? Our paths have been allotted to us in very different directions. *Homme propose, ciel dispose !* 'Tis all for the best. Once more adieu.

“ Faithfully and gratefully yours,
“ EDGAR WALDEGRAVE WARD.”

Faithfully hers ? That was just what he

had not been! *Homme propose?* If the man *had* proposed, their paths would not have taken such different directions. As Miss Beaumorice ended the letter, and sat idly looking at it, she was conscious of a great chill at her heart. Here were kind, friendly expressions, too; but somehow she felt that Dr. Waldegrave Ward had either never been what she thought him, or had very much gone off. Altogether this letter was a poor affair; there was no real heart in it. Either he did not feel much, or he was a bad hand at expressing feeling. Perhaps he did not *mean* to express any; perhaps he thought it unsuitable to express any to her. It might justly be so; but she was rather sorry he had written at all. She did not want thanks; and she was hurt at the dissimulation he proposed for Alured, and wished her to enforce. She would do no such thing; if she influenced him at all, it would be the other way.

And fired with the idea that it was her duty to keep the lad true and honest, she at once wrote him an affectionate, sympathetic note, inquiring about his health, cautioning him anew against violent training, and telling him how even prize-fighters injured their general health by it, while strengthening their muscular system. She added, “I am sure I hope with all my heart that you may pass ; but of course you will not conceal from the medical examiners what happened here ; it would be inconsistent with your probity to do so.”

It was not till she had finished this note, that Miss Beaumorice gave herself time to read the second letter.

“A pennyworth of chat and plenty for the money,” thought she, carelessly, as she opened it. She knew pretty well that Mary’s pennyworths of chat were usually amusing enough, but not of that absorbing interest to interfere with real business ; and just

now, when her head was full of that old castle on the Rhine, with the solitary widower pacing its innumerable rooms, and the young man and beautiful girl hanging over the battlements, English chat seemed rather tame in comparison.

However, Mary's letter proved to have something more serious in it than usual. She wrote :—

“ You have little suspected, dearest Miss Beaumorice, that the long silence of your young friend has been occasioned by an event, or chain of events, that will affect her whole life. I am engaged to be married ! I give you ten, I give you twelve guesses, but you will never guess aright ! What do you think of my becoming a neighbour of yours ? Longfield and Lambs-croft are not so far apart as to forbid my being in that relation to you, are they ? Oh, I am *very* happy ! I always said I

should like to be a clergyman's wife, and now my wish will be accomplished, for Mr. Brooke is appointed to the curacy of Longfield ; and I do hope, dear friend, that during the pleasant summer evenings you will often come over to us. Mamma says it will be so nice for me, your being so near us ; she knows that in my little difficulties you will let me apply to you.

“ What a strange change it seems ! A completely different hue is thrown over everything. I had not the least idea he cared so much for me till a very little while ago. It has been all since Christmas. Have you ever seen him, or heard anything of him, in your part of the world ? I think you will say he is nice-looking, and very gentlemanlike ; his tastes are very refined. I hope his preaching will be liked ; his views will quite suit you, I think. We have not had leisure to enter much on these subjects, yet, of course. You will think I

can only write on one theme at present, but I hardly know how to change it. You will see me before the horse-chestnuts are out of bloom, for it is to come off very soon. The curacy is not much, but we think there's no good waiting. I am of age, you know ; so papa has consented. I have worlds of things to attend to ; so excuse my adding more now, dear Miss Beaumorice, than mamma's and Margaret's love. Your ever affectionate

“ MARY BEAUFORT.”

Miss Beaumorice, though surprised, was much pleased to hear of the engagement. Mary was the only child of Mr. Beaufort's first wife, who had been her early friend ; she had never been very intimate with his second. Marriage had always been the goal to which Mary's views had been directed since she left school. Had she missed it, her family would have been disappointed, and she herself perhaps soured.

She hardly seemed much wanted at home, where a second family had sprung up to fill the first place in Mrs. Beaufort's affection. It was well for her, then, that she should have the prospect of a union with a right-minded young clergyman ; for such Miss Beaumorice assumed him to be, though he was unknown to her even by report. She wrote warmly to Mary, who soon found time to write to her again, expressing a hope to see her soon in London. She proceeded to say,—

“ John has secured a house at Longfield, the same that the last curate had, with all the planned furniture, which will save us much trouble. So now the prime object is to secure two nice servants ; and I want you, dear Miss Beaumorice, to find me a couple of promising ones that don't require teaching. Let them be nice-looking, please, and girls that know their place and know their work.”



CHAPTER VII.

A BRIDE ELECT.

“How is it that masters, and science and art,
One grain of intelligence fail to impart,
Unless in that magical compound combined
Philosophers join in defining as mind ?”

JANE TAYLOR.

WHEN Miss Beaumorice went up to receive her dividends, she called on an old uncle in the City, who was generally too busy to see her more than for a few minutes ; and then proceeded north-westwards to call upon Mary, whom she had forewarned to expect her. Mary was out, however, but had left word that she would soon return, and that she

hoped Miss Beaumorice would rest in her boudoir, and amuse herself with a book.

The boudoir was of tiny dimensions, adjoining Mary's bedroom ; and both of them were littered with finery and nicknacks. Even money lay loose on the table, as well as opened notes.

“ How can Mary put such temptations in the way of servants ? ” thought Miss Beaumorice, “ unless, indeed, hers are as honest and honourable as mine. My girls would no more think of reading a letter that did not belong to them than of taking money that was not theirs ; but London servants are not always as reliable.”

She looked around for a book, and took up one after another, but found them wholly unreadable. She put down volume after volume with distaste, then took up some of them again to see what food for

the mind Mary liked, but closed them with strong aversion after a few dips here and there.

“Are these the books young people read now?” thought she. “What false pictures of life are here!—what bad taste and careless writing! But I suppose readers have become indifferent to these faults as long as they secure plenty of sensation. Well, I hope Mary will soon return.”

Punctuality was not one of Mary’s virtues, and she unconcernedly left her old friend to wait for her while she let a shopman show her one pretty thing after another that she had no intention of buying. When at length she returned home and found Miss Beaumorice, her pretty face smiled joyous welcome, and she kissed her most affectionately. Her younger sister, Margaret, accompanied her; an honest-looking, pleasant girl of sixteen, whom Miss Beaumorice had not seen for some time,

and who in the interim had grown almost out of knowledge.

Directly Mary had divested herself of her walking dress, she launched into the full tide of talk, and began showing Miss Beaumorice the pretty things that lay about the room.

“How do you like this? What do you think of this? Is it not pretty? Mamma chose this; it is something quite new.”

“And how do you like this?” said Margaret, laughing and putting on a smart bonnet.

“Margaret, you must not touch that,” said Mary, taking it from her without ceremony.

“But how do you like this?” pursued Margaret, more seriously, taking up a large coarse straw hat with a simple blue ribbon, which lay on the bed, curiously contrasting with the gay millinery around it: “this is

what Mary is to use when she visits the poor."

And she placed it on Mary's head, while Mary looked quite aware of being very pretty in it. Then putting it aside, she took up a new dress, saying, "The new colour, you know. Do you think it suits me? I shall wear it to go away in—John likes it. These handkerchiefs were ruinous, but they are beautifully worked. Papa said I ought not to have worked handkerchiefs, but that was nonsense. I said, 'Papa dear, you had better give mamma a good round sum, and let her and me arrange how to lay it out.' Of course, a man could know nothing, you know. Margaret, you had better go away now—we shall soon come down to lunch. This was sent by aunt Jay. Frightful, is not it? People should take care not to be behind the age when they give wedding presents. And I shall have to thank her just as much as if

I liked it. This church service, bound in ivory, is from John's sister, Alicia Brooke. Very nice, though I have quite a new one already."

Mary's head seemed fuller of her trousseau than of her lover.

"Well," said she, sitting down beside Miss Beaumorice, "what about the maids? Have you found me two pieces of perfection?"

"No, not even one. Two have offered, but I doubt if they will suit you. One has lived with an old lady named Cole, who is always changing. The other with old Mrs. Caryl."

"Both old," said Mary. "Their ways very different, of course, from those of young persons. Consequently their maids can hardly have had the right sort of training. And training is precisely what I don't mean to undertake. I couldn't if I would, and I wouldn't if I could. Why

should I, when trained servants are to be had?"

"Just so; only none happen to be disengaged in my neighbourhood at present."

"Oh, but how disappointing! I so entirely depended on you. Perhaps these girls might do after all. Have you taken their characters?"

"No, I thought I would consult you first."

"Oh, take their characters by all means, please—perhaps they may do. Are they pretty, not too pretty?"

"They are neat and passably good-looking."

"That sounds promising—so please just ask if they know their work and know their place."

"You mean——"

"I mean, keep in their proper place—keep their distance, show proper respect—

don't answer again, and so on," said Mary, hastily.

The visitors' bell rang at this moment.

"That's John's ring," said Mary; "but we won't go down yet. Mamma has dressed by this time, and Margaret is down if she is not. I want to show you everything before lunch. I'll just put this on: tell me how you like the effect. Do you think it suits my style?"

"Quite so; but Longfield is not at all a dressy place. My dear Mary, let us go down; my stay will be short, you know; and Mr. Brooke will not like your keeping him waiting."

"Oh, he's used to that," said Mary, gaily. "I keep him in good order, I assure you. I want to have quite a confidential talk with you, now we are by ourselves. Here we are, my dear friend, about to try the problem of 'how to live

on three hundred a year.' How should you solve it ?"

"A good many curates have to live on a third of that sum."

"Oh, but I don't mean in *that* style, you know. I don't mean to live like a beggar ; and I'm sure John does not."

"I dare say you have heard the reply of a young lady to whom the question was proposed by her lover,—'Oh, that will be very easy, dear. There will be a hundred for you, and a hundred for me, and *of course* the housekeeping can't cost a hundred.'"

Mary laughed slightly, and said,—

"Of course that was nonsense. But now I want to talk sense ; and I thought you would be able to give me a hint or two. It's a pity, one must confess, that we shall not have four hundred a year instead of three, because that would be just a hundred a quarter."

“A good many would prefer four to three,” said Miss Beaumorice, smiling.

“Yes; but seriously speaking, would not it be much more comfortable? One could settle one’s accounts so much better.”

“Much better.”

“Now how much, as a practical person, do you really think I might make do for housekeeping?”

“Oh, that must depend on the moderation of your desires, and on your management.”

“Of course; but how much? just say.”

Miss Beaumorice still held back.

“The house-rent is not my affair, but everything else. Shall we say fifty?”

“Oh, my dear Mary!”

“Too little, you think,” said Mary, with chagrin. “I had thought I might keep within it.”

“I would not advise you to expect it.”

“But what shall I do if I have no more?” said Mary, quickly. “Well, then, suppose by way of argument I double it. Say a hundred, or rather a hundred and four pounds. That will be two pounds a week. What say you now?”

“I think,” said Miss Beaumorice, hesitating, “that you must be a good manager, and study economy, and not mind little privations.”

“John will never like privations,” said Mary. “Not bread-and-cheese dinners, nor even cold meat.”

“You need not have cold meat unless you like it. But the fact is, you will perhaps spend less than two pounds one week, and a good deal more the next.”

“I mean to spend just the same every week,” said Mary; “and if there is anything I cannot afford one week, I’ll wait for it till the next.”

“Or till you can afford it—that will be

excellent," said Miss Beaumorice. "I only hope——"

Here a bell down-stairs was rung smartly.

"John is rather impatient," said Mary.

"Oh, do let us go down, my dear. I'm getting hungry."

"But that's not the luncheon bell. It will ring presently."

"But I want to be introduced to Mr. Brooke."

"Yes, yes, you shall; but just look at this pretty chain he gave me yesterday."

"What an ungrateful little puss you are, to be trifling with him in this way! Come, I really want to go down."

"We will, then," said Mary,—lingering, however, to put her chain in a little case which would not shut. At this instant the house-door was noisily slammed, as if to give general notice that somebody was gone out.

“ I do believe that’s John !” cried Mary, changing colour and running to the window. “ Yes, there he is, just turning the corner. That’s too bad.”

“ You really have tried his patience,” said Miss Beaumorice, who, however, was rather dismayed at this way of “ showing her he was the stronger.”

“ What right had he to be impatient ?” said Mary, ready to cry. “ I’ve no notion of such airs. I shall scold him pretty sharply when we next meet, I can tell him.”

“ Oh no ! do not ! He had really some reason to complain. It is a great pity. Let us go down now.”

“ Yes, we will,” said Mary, who, in spite of taking such a high tone, had been a little frightened. The luncheon bell rang loudly, and one of her schoolboy brothers rattled at the door, crying,—

“ You’re to come down directly, Mary.”

“Coming, Mr. Saucebox,” said Mary, linking her arm in Miss Beaumorice’s, and taking her down-stairs.

“I am surprised,” said Miss Beaumorice, “that Mrs. Beaufort does not give you some advice which would supersede the necessity of mine.”

“Oh, mamma is dreadfully unhelpful and unsympathetic,” said Mary. “She says she knows I shall get into trouble, and that the scale on which we must keep house will be so different from what she had always been accustomed to, that she has no advice to give that would be of the least use. If I *do* get into trouble,” added she, almost crying, “whose fault is it? Who has taught me?”

As they entered the dining-room her face underwent a sudden and really ludicrous change of expression, for there, with the rest of the party, sat Mr. Brooke, a good-looking young clergyman, in faultless

attire of the latest clerical cut. She recovered from her surprise more immediately than Miss Beaumorice could have thought possible, giving him her hand with a smile of welcome, though her heart was beating fast.

“ You did not expect to see me perhaps,” said he, smiling.

“ Where have you been ?” said Mary.

“ To post a letter for Mrs. Beaufort. I knew I could save the post.”

“ Oh !”

“ You are late, Mary,” said Mrs. Beaufort.

“ Oh, I was having such a nice chat with Miss Beaumorice, mamma. We had such an immensity to say to one another.”

“ Not about any of the present company, I suppose,” said Mr. Brooke, laughing.

“ About things of infinitely more moment.”

“Just as if that were possible,” said Margaret, merrily.

“Quite possible. We were not talking of persons, but things.”

“Excellent,” said Mr. Brooke. “I only wish ladies would oftener do so.”

“And gentlemen too, I wish,” said Mary; “do they never deal in personalities?”

“Not as often as women; and generally about more important things.”

“That depends; does it not, Miss Beaumorice? At any rate, we were not dealing in personalities--not talking of *you*, sir.”

“Oh, of course not. Well, Miss Beaumorice, we are going to be rather near neighbours of yours.”

“I wish it would be more than rather near,” said Miss Beaumorice. “I find it a long walk to Longfield, but I hope practice will make it seem shorter.”

“Oh, yes, indeed it must. Do you know much of Longfield?”

“Very little. I know Mrs. Garrow. She is a very nice person.”

“Ah, we must make you like it. I like it very much.”

“Completely out of the world,” said Mrs. Beaufort.

“Why, that is what newly married people always like, mamma,” said Margaret. “They think it so romantic.”

“The whole affair is romantic, I think,” said Mrs. Beaufort. “People come by experience to know the difference between romance and reality.”

“Ours is to be a life’s romance, mamma,” said Mary.

“Oh, well, it is to be something different from everything else, I suppose. Have a little fricasseed chicken, Miss Beaumorice.”

“I should like one of those apples,

please," said Mary. She took one, and began eating it like a schoolgirl, *au naturel*. Mr. Brooke winced.

"Have one too, John."

"No, thank you," said he, rather gravely.

"You look as if my eating one were too much for you. Does it set your teeth on edge?"

"Almost."

"Nonsense! What are you thinking of?"

"Oh, of a question in an old book,— 'Why did Eve eat the apple without paring it?'"

"Don Quixote," said Mary.

"*You* don't read Don Quixote, I hope?"

"Yes, I do," said Mary, hardly. "Not the great edition, but a nice little American one."

"Oh,"—looking relieved.

Miss Beaumorice saw that he was sensitive on more points than one, and hoped Mary would not continually be heedlessly aggrieving him. To hint so to her would not be of the least use.

When she left her friends, she fell into a train of thought that was by no means cheerful.

“They all seem very willing to lose Mary,” thought she; “and she seems equally willing to leave them. How comes it to pass, I wonder? She has hardly known Mr. Brooke long enough to feel she is turning her twenty shillings into a sovereign. Nor will she very readily submit, I fear, to a sovereign will not her own. Ah, well, all will be for the best, I hope. The attachment may be deeper than I can understand.”

Then she began rather wistfully to consider what her wedding present to Mary should be. She had received so many

pretty and even elegant gifts already, that it would be difficult to avoid choosing a duplicate; and many presents that she treated very slightly, as hardly deserving thanks, must yet have cost much more than Miss Beaumorice could afford.

“ It is of no good to compete with the rich in money-worth,” thought she. “ What I shall give will be merely in token of affection; but yet I should wish it to be something she wants and would like to use. Some of her presents are quite out of character with the position in which she is going to live; but she did not seem to like them the less for that. I fear I may be getting a little behindhand in my ideas of what is right and fitting, and that they need brushing up. Perhaps the Baker Street bazaar may enlighten me a little, and supply me with some pretty and elegant novelty within my means.”

So she went there, and at first thought

the only difficulty would be to choose ; but a great deal of cogitation ensued, and what she most hovered over was a beautifully painted French china inkstand, equally suitable for drawing-room and dressing-room. On this she finally decided ; and, to diminish the chances of breakage, ordered it to be carefully packed and sent to Mary on the spot, with a card bearing a few pencilled lines. If her purse was thereby considerably lightened, so was her mind ; she did not at all object to abridging her own little may-wants, and even must-wants, as long as she was thereby enabled to fulfil her obligations to those she loved, and who might reasonably take umbrage at seeming to be neglected or forgotten.

After this she called on two or three old friends, and then made her way to the railway station, and took her place in a railway carriage that speedily conveyed her

within an easy distance of her country home, the air feeling lighter and fresher and sweeter every minute as she approached it.



CHAPTER VIII.

TWO OLD LADIES.

“Look upon this presentiment, and on this.”

Hamlet.

MOST lovers of Crabbe will remember his description of the “ancient maiden lady,” not too flatteringly portrayed, and the finished Dutch painting of her surroundings :—

“Down by the churchway walk, and where the brook
Winds round the chancel like a shepherd’s crook,
In that small house, with those green pales before,
Where jasmine trails on either side the door,
Where those dark shrubs, that now grow wild at will,
Were clipped in form and tantalized with skill,
Where cockles blanched, and pebbles neatly spread,
Formed shining borders for the larkspur’s bed,

There lived a lady, wise, austere, and nice,
Who by her virtue showed her scorn of vice."

Miss Beaumorice had sometimes idly wondered whether the prim mistress of the abode answering to this description on the outskirts of her village were wise, austere, and nice—or only fidgety, punctilious, and hard to please. She had seen her in the little front garden, intently supervising the gardener while he trimmed her pinks. She had heard her rather sharp voice indoors rating her servant: she rather distrusted appearances. However, for Mary's sake, she was about to invade her dominions, having previously sent a polite inquiry when she might wait on Mrs. Cole.

The church clock struck the appointed hour when Miss Beaumorice raised the latch of the little gate and trod the neat pebbled walk. The door was opened almost the instant she rang the bell by a servant girl with very red eyes. Mrs. Cole

stood on the very threshold of the parlour door, so that Miss Beaumorice found herself ushered in the next instant. The girl was hastily stepping forward to place a chair, but a look seemed to warn her off with some precipitation; and Mrs. Côle then invited her visitor to sit on a small couch beside the fireplace, and in the farthest corner from the door. She then seated herself very near her, and looked at her inquiringly.

“I have called,” began Miss Beaumorice, “to inquire into the—”

Here Mrs. Cole, with a telegraphic movement more easily imagined than described, hastened noiselessly to the door, made sure that no one was outside, closed it with dexterity, and returned as if “shod with felt.”

“You’ve no idea,” said she, in an excited whisper; “only the most constant vigilance —you know the old saying, ‘Walls have

ears,' especially where there is a key-hole."

"Oh, but I should hope the keyholes are seldom so used," said Miss Beaumorice, trying to take lightly such an uncomfortable beginning.

"Constantly, constantly," replied Mrs. Cole, still under her breath. "Never know when I'm alone."

"That argues rather too much leisure, I think," said Miss Beaumorice. "A well-employed girl would hardly find time or disposition for so idle a habit. There is something so lowering in it, that I should think none but a very trumpery girl would ever be guilty of it."

"May I beg you to lower your voice? The party in question, ma'am, is truly a very trumpery girl, but if I were to charge her with the offence she would have me up to the town hall for taking away her character."

“From what you say, it appears very unlikely she would suit the friend for whom I am inquiring ; and therefore it will be unnecessary, I think, to trouble you further.”

“Oh, as to trouble, pray don’t mention it. I am happy to oblige you, but I do assure you I think you may do better for your friend.”

“The young woman has not been long with you, perhaps ?” said Miss Beaumorice, unwilling to be so soon discomfited.

“Ten months—just ten months,—I really cannot put up with her any longer.”

“Has she become better or worse, do you think ?”

“Oh, ever so much worse. At first she did try to please—and she did not take nearly as many liberties ; but now I really never have a moment’s peace—obliged to lock up everything.”

“Ah,” said Miss Beaumorice, “I think

I never could contend with a dishonest person."

"Oblige me by not naming the word," said Mrs. Cole, hastily. "Walls, as I said just now, have ears ; only when things disappear, you know, or diminish, we know what it looks like."

"Certainly," said Miss Beaumorice. "Well, it really makes one in trouble for the unhappy girl's future."

"Oh, *she's* not unhappy, I can tell you ! Sings at the top of her voice when *she's* at her work (unless when *she's* in one of her humours), and laughs and talks with any one that comes in her way."

"Well, I hope she will see it is to her own interest, before long, to change her ways."

"She'll never mend, ma'am, never !" said Mrs. Cole, with emphasis. "If she wasn't an orphan and friendless she'd never have been here so long, for *she's* dying for a

change, only she can't afford to throw herself out of house and home."

"Of course not. Poor thing, one can't help pitying her a little."

"I don't pity her a bit!" interposed Mrs. Cole ; "it's I that am to be pitied."

"Yes, indeed. Well, I am sure, I wish there were a greater hope of your reforming her."

"Oh, there's no hope at all, ma'am."

"Because, you see, after all, a familiar face is more pleasant to us than a strange one or a succession of strange ones ; and her face *is* rather a nice one, and she's very neat."

"She dressed for *you*. And she dresses for the tradespeople—for every one but me."

"Girls naturally love dress. And in the rare cases where they do not they generally are slovens, untidy in their work no less than in their persons."

“Yes, indeed, ma’am—oh, I can’t bear a sloven.”

“And when they are fond of making little improvements in their own dress they often acquire a lightness of hand and dexterity that they turn to very good account in fine works for their mistresses.”

“That’s true, too,” said Mrs. Cole. “There was a girl, now, called Lucy, who would toss me up a cap as lightly as a pancake, only she was such a story-teller.”

“I always make as great a point of truth as of honesty,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“Then I wonder you get any servants at all,” said Mrs. Cole. “I always give them a good rating when I catch them at it, but I’m obliged to wink at a good deal.”

“I find it answers best in a general way,” said Miss Beaumorice, “to rely more on general principles than on particulars.”

“As how?” said Mrs. Cole.

“By pointing out to them in the first place, if there seems any need for it, the duty and excellence of truth, and the self-respect and respect of others it always commands in the long run, but especially its being what God exacts of us all, and will undoubtedly punish us for transgressing in.”

“That’s beyond me,—too high-flown,” said Mrs. Cole. “When I find them out, I ask them what they expect will become of them and promise to show them up ; but, dear me, they no more mind it——”

“I believe there are some such poor ill-conducted girls ; happily I have had no experience of them,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“Then, ma’am, you’ve been very fortunate.”

“They must doubtless have had very bad or misjudging, neglectful mothers. When I am speaking about a young girl with a view to engaging her, I always

inquire whether she has been brought up by a good mother."

"And how seldom you find it the case, I should think!" said Mrs. Cole. "Nineteen mothers out of twenty give their girls no bringing up at all—don't teach them to set or stitch, give them no notion of mending or cutting out—scarcely teach them to cook a potato."

"I never incline to try girls of that sort," said Miss Beaumorice. "Somebody with more energy and vocation for the work must undertake them. Very high work it is, too—noble work, indeed; work that lies within almost every lady's reach, if she really wants a mission, which is what so many are now crying out for. I admire those who throw themselves into it, even if they make a few mistakes at first. For my own part, I am hardly equal to more than training girls for my own particular use, which generally leads to their passing on

to better places, or being respectably married."

"I should think your place was at a premium, ma'am," said Mrs. Cole.

"Well, I have been very fortunate on the whole, certainly," said Miss Beau-morice.

"I should say *the girls* were fortunate," said Mrs. Cole. "They'd do anything for you with the chance of a husband."

"Oh, but that is an accidental circumstance not kept in view."

"Don't believe it, ma'am ! And then I daresay you give high wages."

"No, indeed ; my wages are rather low. I always begin low, but then I raise them every year, which I consider a fair arrangement, because every year their services become more valuable."

"Do you mean that if a servant lived with you thirty years you would go on raising her wages annually ?"

Miss Beaumorice laughed, and said that eventuality had never occurred to her. Her young women generally lived with her four or five years, and then settled near her in homes of their own,—she had quite a little circle of them round her.

Mrs. Cole did not know how to take this. She said, “I should think your kitchen was never clear of them when your back was turned.”

“Oh, they have duties and interests of their own to keep them at home,” said Miss Beaumorice ; “but they know that when they do come they are always welcome. In fact, it is one of the pleasures of my not very eventful life to take interest in the welfare of these humble friends, and help them in their little difficulties.”

Mrs. Cole said, “Humph!” and seemed weighing in her mind how much of this to believe. Presently she said abruptly,—

“I suppose, now, you have not one of

these pattern maids on hand that you could help me to?"

"It is because I have not," said Miss Beaumorice, smiling, "that I am troubling you now with inquiries about your servant. A young friend has commissioned me to look out for her."

"Then, since your friend is young, I should say she had better not try Jane."

"I am afraid she had better not. May I speak to her before I go, and tell her I decline her services?"

"Please be careful what you say," said Mrs. Cole, with her hand on the bell, but not ringing it. "Remember, pray, I did not say she was not sober, or civil, or honest."

"Certainly."

The bell was rung, and Jane entered with an anxious, worried look.

"I am going," began Miss Beaumorice, "to decline troubling you any further, be-

cause I do not think you would suit my friend," on which Jane darted a look of hot anger at her mistress.

"She is young," pursued Miss Beaumorice, gently, "and anxious not to be troubled by training, which is what, I think, you probably require. It would be little to the advantage of either, therefore, if I were to engage you for her. It will be a better thing for you if you can find a mistress who will be kind enough to give you the training you need. It may not be pleasant at first—*no* training is; but if you submit yourself to it good-humouredly and heartily it will be a good thing for you all your life, even when you come to have a home of your own."

Jane's face instantly cleared. "I will, ma'am," said she, heartily. "I only wish I knew where to find such a mistress."

"Sometimes," said Miss Beaumorice, after a short pause, "we go about seeking for

something that all the while is at our elbow. Perhaps this good mistress is very near to you now" (a look of utter disbelief crossed Jane's face). "It is quite worth your while to try if it may not be so, even if you are looking out for the other mistress who may not immediately appear. But I think you would be more likely to find this the case if you made trial of it heartily, without troubling yourself, for the time, to look out for the other mistress at all. There are two parties who must consent to this."

"Yes indeed," said Mrs. Cole, abruptly.

Jane's face again clouded.

"At any rate," pursued Miss Beaumrice, "you have not another place secured at present, and have to remain here till your time is up, unless at great disadvantage to yourself. Surely it will be to your interest to improve that time as much as possible by obliging your mistress, as you, doubtless, must know how to do after living

with her ten months ; so that her last impression of you may be a favourable one. She will then, of course, be able to speak of you much more highly than at present she could conscientiously do, however much her kindness might dispose her to it on account of your friendless position. She would not only be able, but I am sure she would be disposed to do so if she saw a hearty disposition on your part to please her. You *will* try, will you not ? I am sure of it."

Jane said softly, "Yes, ma'am."

"You may go now," said Mrs. Cole shortly, as she saw Miss Beaumorice rise, "I can let the lady out."

Jane curtseyed and retired.

"You got quite the whip hand of her, ma'am, for the time," said Mrs. Cole, in an emphatic undertone, "but *only* for a time, I'm sure."

"Oh, I hope better things. Sometimes

a young person only wants an excuse to submit. Very often."

"Well, I hope it may be so, though I don't expect it."

"Give her a fair trial—for her own sake, you know,—and I hope it will be for yours too. I shall take interest in your success. Good morning."

"*Good morning;*" and the interview concluded.

"I hope my next visit will be pleasanter and more successful," thought Miss Beau-morice, as she pursued her way. "Surely Mrs. Cole, if she had had the mind, might in ten months have won the confidence and affection of this girl, and trained her into usefulness and obedience. Instead of which she has apparently deteriorated. I much doubt her success with her now. She seems to act on a wrong principle or to have no principle to act on."

Reflecting deeply on the subject, the

walk did not seem long to Mrs. Caryl's gate. There was something very suggestive of small-scale comfort and refinement in the little cottage-villa within it. One door and two windows were all that appeared in front, among mantling creepers : but the door was not narrow and pinched like Mrs. Cole's, and had a pretty stone porch to screen it from sun, wind, and rain, and cast a pretty shadow : the windows, one above and one below, admitted plenty of light, were glazed with crown glass as bright as a diamond, and shaded with snow-white netting and fringe. As for the garden ground in front, it was amusing to see that something like landscape gardening had been not merely attempted but achieved, by means of a slightly winding walk, not too narrow, from the gate to the door, a tiny lawn of velvet turf, with a rustic basket on three unbarked supports in the centre, filled with creepers and geraniums, and

actually a little plantation of trees that had not yet overgrown their place, which made the garden at once pretty and retired. The chief secret was that too much had not been attempted. And nothing had been done without judicious consideration of the effect. In the spirit of Miss Edgeworth's French waiting-maid, not a pin but had its mission. And so little trouble too! A gardener might do everything wanted in a quarter of a day. Almost no mowing, or rolling, or brushing, very little pruning, and probably a good deal of it done by the lady herself, for the plants and flowers looked as if they were being continually touched up.

Thought Miss Beaumorice as she rang the bell, "I should like just such a little house: there is nothing poverty-stricken; nothing superfluous; one might live here comfortably with one maid; in fact, there cannot be work for two; and the kitchen must be

so near the parlour that neither of the inmates can be lonely."

Within all was equally to her mind. The door was opened by a plain but highly respectable-looking middle-aged woman, who showed her into the parlour. Mrs. Caryl, a quiet old lady in black, was seated at her netting, but there were writing materials on the table. She rose with a pleasant smile to receive her visitor.

"Susan told me to expect this call from you," said she when they were seated, "but I was not sure that the shower might not deter you from coming out."

"Oh, it has been nothing," said Miss Beaumorice, "and I was under shelter when it occurred. It has made everything pleasantly fresh. The grass in your garden sparkles with bright drops."

"They look so pretty," said Mrs. Caryl. "You are complimentary to call it a garden. but it is just enough for me, and for an old

man whom nobody else will employ. They say he is past work, but he can do just enough to excuse me for paying him a few shillings, though he requires constant watching, being rather fond of his own ways, which are not always mine. You come for Susan's character. She is a very nice girl indeed, and I was very sorry when I found she wished for a change ; but I could not be much surprised after her living three years in so quiet a place. I am an old companion, you see, for a young girl, and she is too well-principled to go astray after younger ones. So, after some talk, I agreed to her looking out, only begging her to remain here till she found quite a safe place. She has been longer doing this than she expected. Meanwhile I have found a servant to supply her place, whom I have taken into the house at once, that she might not be in lodgings."

After this a frank conversation ensued,

which tended to give Miss Beaumorice a very favourable opinion both of mistress and servant. Mrs. Caryl did not launch into excessive encomiums, but spoke heartily and with every appearance of sincerity of her young maid, who, in all material points, such as truth, faithfulness, obedience, cleanliness, disposition to please and to be contented, &c., seemed unimpeachable. The question whether she would be equal to the work required of her was one that could only be answered by trial. Miss Beaumorice thought the experiment quite worth making, and engaged to write to Miss Beaufort to say so. At this point Susan came in, neat and smiling, with a heap of letters and book parcels from the post; and Miss Beaumorice, after exchanging a few words with her, and promising to let her know the result of her letter, rose to go.

“Pray do not hurry,” said Mrs. Caryl,

pleasantly. “I quite enjoy your visit. I cannot say that in general I can profess as much.”

“It would only be intrusion to remain longer, when you have such a heap of correspondence awaiting your leisure.”

“Oh, these are chiefly proofs ; I know their contents pretty well. There will be plenty of time for them by and by, when I cannot have the pleasure of your company.”

“You are very enviable, I think,” said Miss Beaumorice, “if you have such a resource as—authorship.”

“Yes, it *is* a resource that I am thankful for on more accounts than one,” said Mrs. Caryl, cheerfully. “For one thing, it is a privilege for a woman at my time of life to have the means of securing her independence by what is, after all, as much an amusement as a labour. Then it gives one many little opportunities of being helpful

to others—gives purpose to one's reading—gives continual subjects to hunt up and think about, quite apart from petty scandals and local gossips. And the actual craft itself is very dear to me; so that it really helps to make me a happy old lady."

And her face shone with smiles as she said so.

"I am sure it must," said Miss Beau-morice, energetically. "In a harmless sense I may say I envy you."

"You need never do that; for there is nothing to hinder your doing the same thing."

"Except the ability," said Miss Beau-morice, laughing. "I should not have your success, and that would make all the difference."

"How do you know till you try? I would not say so to every one, but I do so confidently to you."

“ Oh, Mrs. Caryl ! How can you do that ?”

“ Why, by a sort of intuition, I suppose ; of course, I don’t pretend to be infallible, but ‘ set a thief to catch a thief,’—set an author to detect in another an aptitude for authorship.”

“ I wish you were right ; but I assure you I have not the least persuasion that you are so.”

“ Well, wait till the next dull day, or long, lonely, evening,” said Mrs. Caryl, “ wait till some subject presents itself to you—I do not bid you hunt about for one, but when it comes of itself, be grateful, and do your best for it.”

“ Comes of itself ! But that would be inspiration.”

“ Call it by that fine name if you like, though I don’t ; but I always find I do best what comes to me in this unsought, unpremeditated way. It may have been

the result of much foregone thought—of many thoughts, and feelings, and experiences, and vexations, and mortifications, and scraps of other people's sayings, and bits of sermons and passages in books, and glimpses of scenery and of cottage life, and—or a hundred things besides, that without any particular trouble of mine have rolled themselves up till—till they offer themselves to my pen almost irresistibly, so that I should be graceless indeed not to write them down."

"Truly I think so!" said Miss Beau-morice, warmly. "Well, I hope such a conglomeration of happy thoughts may suggest themselves some time or other to me; but our minds are so different."

"That need not hinder," said Mrs. Caryl. "You must *have* some mind, of course, in order to turn it to account; but when you have the raw article, it is surprising how much can be done with it by

practice and by training. If you really have the desire, and the need, only try ; I am not afraid of the result. Good-bye ; but don't let this be our last as well as first meeting. I am no visitor, you perhaps know ; but drop in on me now and then when you feel inclined, *if* you ever feel inclined."

"I am sure I shall. Thank you ; thank you very much."

They shook hands warmly as they parted.



CHAPTER IX.

TEA-TABLE TALK.

“We took our work, and went, you see,
To have an early cup of tea.”

JANE TAYLOR.

AS Miss Beaumorice took her way homeward along the devious country road, with broad turf margins and budding hedges, her sense of fatigue was beguiled by amusing fancies of what she might write about, if she were minded to follow Mrs. Caryl’s suggestion. Many a pretty thought occurred to her which seemed as if it would be the easiest thing in the world to write down when at home; but on her actual arrival there, all

these pleasant day-dreams were scattered, like sparrows from corn, by the sight of a letter awaiting her, which she saw at once was from Alured.

He wrote in high spirits. He had passed ; and owing to what happy train of circumstancees he did not fail to particularize. He gratefully spoke of his obligations to her and to Miss Partridge, who had given him a higher motive-power in working at what had previously seemed to him very unnecessary as well as very tiresome studies.

“ For instance,” he said, “ it at first appeared absurd to me to pore over algebra and Euclid, when the chief duties I should be called on to fulfil would be of a strictly practical nature. I did not see why I should be forced through a routine that Wellington was never subjected to, and probably would not have mastered. You and Miss Partridge made me see that the

mere knowledge a candidate acquires in preparing for competitive examination, is only part of the benefit he receives ;—that still more valuable are the habits he acquires of application and industry. Dr. G. says I have much improved in thoroughness and industry lately, which I don't say boastingly, but because I know it will give you pleasure. I certainly was a good deal surprised at my own luck, I was going to call it, but I do not think you like the word. I thought Headley a great deal more likely to pass than I was, yet he has not. He overstrained his mind at first ; and then, instead of relaxing it with cricket and football, took to smoking and drinking. This is the case with too many crammers ; they lose the energy required to play heartily.

“ In fact, though I don't cram, and have not the head for it, I feel very listless sometimes after brain-work, from half past six till one, and would rather smoke with

Headley than take a brisk walk. But I knew it would not do ; and, on the contrary, have done my best to get him to join me in long walks and athletic exercises. We had planned a walking tour together at Easter, if he passed, and proposed—don't be shocked—to look in on you ; but since he has not, he has become desponding and recluse, and will not go anywhere."

Miss Beaumorice grieved over the falling off of one of Alured's familiar friends, though she did not feel very anxious to make his acquaintance. She sent Alured her warm congratulations, and encouraged him to steady persistence in well doing ; adding that she hoped she should not lose his Easter visit because he could not get a companion.

Then she wrote to Mary about the characters of the two servants ; and then the thought recurred to her that had floated in her mind coming home. She tried to com-

mit them to paper ; and even gave a long hour to the effort. But no :—

“ As pebbles on the beach appear,
Beneath the waters, bright and clear ;
But, taken thence and dried, they lose
Their polished and transparent hues,”

so the polished and transparent thoughts that had pleased her so much under the influence of fresh air and brisk exercise, now “ taken thence and dried,” appeared trite and inane to the last degree ! Impossible to please others, since they did not even please herself. In a kind of indignation at herself, she thought, “ I knew my own want of aptitude better than Mrs. Caryl could possibly do. She has her line ; I mine, though a humble one.”

A loud ring at the house-bell. What can it be ? A railway parcel from Miss Partridge—a light deal box full of all manner of pretty things for Signor Bonomi’s bazaar. It was Miss Beaumorice who had

suggested the idea to her and asked her aid ; and yet she had done almost nothing herself ; had lately nearly forgotten the whole affair ; and yet the bazaar was to be in May, and here she was in March ! She took shame to herself for it, and inspired with renewed zeal began to hunt up her stores, plan work for herself and her maids, aye, and for her young friends too. Those Nuneham girls always loved benevolent usefulness ; they were clever at fancy works, they had ready invention. She would ask them to co-operate ; she was sure it would not be in vain.

No sooner said than done. Three cordial lines of invitation brought three smiling faces to enliven her tea-table ; and three pairs of hands to be of service.

“ And what is it to be for, dear Miss Beaumorice ? what is the object of the bazaar ? ” inquired Grace. “ Italian Protestantism ? Oh, delightful ; Papa knows

that interesting Dr. De Sanctis ; and sympathizes very much with the Madiai."

" Do tell me, Miss Beaumorice," cried Julia, eagerly, " is Garibaldi a Catholic or a Protestant ? I so want to know."

" Perhaps he hardly knows himself," said Miss Beaumorice. " A Father somebody, you know, is called his chaplain ; but I never heard of a chapel in Caprera. And he reads the Bible. One thing I feel assured of, that he is a Christian, though a singular one."

" Oh, I am so glad to hear you say so. Only they report such strange sayings of his sometimes."

" Ah, Cassius was not the only one who might well complain of having his unconsidered words—

" ' Set in a note-book, conned, and learnt by rote.'

" Many of Garibaldi's *mots*, probably, are utter inventions, at a penny-a-line ; others,

mere jests, that he never meant to be taken in earnest. He feels things so strongly, however, that sometimes he expresses them too strongly—for popular approval at any rate. Then he is taken to task for it."

"See, I have made a penwiper like a little union Jack," said Agnes, "out of the scraps you were going to throw away."

"Throw away nothing, please," said Julia, "they will make pincushions and patches."

"Grandmamma knows an old lady," said Grace, "who at eighty-four made a patchwork quilt for a hospital. It was laid on the bed of a young man who had been a great grief to his family, and had at length reduced himself to want. He noticed among the patches a print resembling a gown of his mother's, which he had greatly admired when a child. Perhaps

like Cowper's mother, she had taught him to amuse himself by copying the flowers with pricks of a pin. At any rate, it brought such touching memories of her to his mind, that his heart softened, and one thing and another strengthened the good impression till he became a reformed young man. When my grandmother heard this she was struck by it, and said, 'If one old lady upwards of eighty-four can make a patchwork quilt, another can.' So she has actually one in progress, which when finished is to be sent to a hospital. She begs patches of her friends; and one peculiarity of her quilt is, that the figures—constellations you may almost call them,—have every one a white centre of calico; on which grandmamma prints a text in large letters with marking ink."

"What an original idea," said Miss Beaumorice. "I will look her out some pieces."

“Grace! don’t you think we might make such a counterpane for Signor Bonomi’s bazaar?” cried Julia.

“Yes, that would be quite a unique contribution,” said Grace. “If there were but time.”

“Oh, we could make time,” said Julia, eagerly, “and the quilt might be smaller than grandmamma’s.”

“Yes, that would be capital,” said Miss Beaumorice. “And my maids shall help you if you like. They will enjoy it.”

“Oh yes, by all means! Many hands make light work.”

“Julia is always striking out new ideas,” said Grace, laughing.

“This hardly deserves to be called one,” said Julia; “it is only an adaptation of grandmamma’s idea.”

“I love invention and originality,” said Miss Beaumorice, “though I have very

little of my own. If you will furnish the new ideas, I will do my best to assist in the workmanship."

"Tell me of some good mottos," said Agnes, "for book-markers. I don't mean texts."

"Hope always."

"Thank you. That will do for one. It is nice and short."

"*Ora et labora.* But that's Latin."

"That will do though. I will book it."

"Aspettare e non venire,
Star in letto e non dormire,
Servire e non gradire,
Son' tre cose a far morire."

"Too long, Grace," said Julia, "Now, Alice."

"*Chiudete la porta,*" said Alice, merrily, which made them all laugh. "I'm sure that's a favourite motto of papa's,"

“And ‘sta in letto’ of yours, Miss Lazy-bones.”

“Harry has a nice set of dried ferns,” said Alice. “I wonder if they would fetch anything.”

“Yes, I should think so, if they are nicely arranged.”

“He has also a collection of people’s crests and monograms, which papa called great nonsense; but they are so beautifully arranged and connected with coloured borders, that they are really very pretty. He is out of conceit with them now, though, and would be glad, very likely, to turn them to good use.”

“That would be very nice.”

“He collected the postage stamps of all nations,” said Alice; and the flags of all nations.”

“Ah that has so often been done now.”

“Not arranged like Harry’s, though. The flags have poetical mottos — from

Shakspere and others—and political ones, some of them in the style of *Punch*."

"Shakspere and *Punch* hand in hand!" said Miss Beaumorice, laughing. "Every taste must surely be pleased."

"I wonder," said Grace, "whether nice little collections of garden-seeds would have any value. To children they might,—little packets, you know, of annuals—we might supply them in almost any quantity, at no expense at all, in sixpenny packets, and give good measure too. Sowing time is coming on."

"I call that an excellent idea," said Miss Beaumorice. "I shall book these suggestions as they occur, that we may not forget them."

"I heard," said Grace, "that the Miss Gambiers were very active at a fancy-fair at Gravesend some time ago, and cleared I forget how much in sixpences and shillings by little sealed notes inscribed 'advice to

gentlemen,' and 'advice to ladies.' The buyers were upon honour not to betray what was inside. It was 'don't be sharp' — 'don't be flat.' There were shouts of laughter."

"Just like one of the Miss Gambiers' jokes," said Miss Beaumorice. "I do not think it particularly witty. But success often depends on the thing being well-timed."

"I wonder how a little book would sell," said Alice, "called 'How to Live a Little Longer.' "

"That would be a taking title certainly, but how would you make it out?" asked Grace.

Alice paused; but Miss Beaumorice said, "Oh, I think some good recipes might be given. 'Don't turn night into day. Don't overload the brain. Don't smoke. Don't fret. Avoid alcohol. Avoid medicine. Use fresh water freely. Take plenty of

exercise. Don't be envious. Don't be cross.'"

"Nine good rules," said Alice. "We may easily make them twelve; one to a page, you know, with vignettes."

Miss Beaumorice laughed and booked it.

"What say you," said she, as she wrote, to a young lady's pictorial account-book? "An ordinary account-book, you know, interleaved with original designs."

"Really we are cutting ourselves out plenty of work," said Grace, with animation. "That would just suit Caroline—she draws so nicely. What should the subjects be?"

"Ah, I have no invention—you must find them," said Miss Beaumorice. "Only I think the title-page might have a group of justice, with her sword and scales, supported by economy and liberality."

"Oh, Miss Beaumorice! how can you

say you have no invention? I am sure Caroline could work out such a hint as that — how should economy be represented?"

"Ah, I cannot say—unless sitting at the feet of justice, and pointing up to her with one hand, and holding her account-book in the other."

"That would do!—as much as to say, 'No, *I* really can't afford that. You see how my sister *Liberality* is scattering her money on the other side.' *Would* they be sisters? or rivals?"

"Sisters, certainly," said Miss Beau-morice, "playing into each other's hands, though each having her separate department."

"That idea would quite suit papa. Then as to the other designs. Let us settle them, and then Caroline will have nothing to do but to sketch them."

"There should be at least two."

“Two? A dozen, please,” interposed Alice; “one for every month.”

“If you can find as many. Suppose we begin with extravagance spending nearly the whole of her first quarter’s allowance at Lewis and Allonby’s—thereby crippling herself for the rest of the three months. That will be an impressive warning, highly approved by parents and guardians.”

“Oh, yes; and let the next be self-denial, eating a *plain* bun instead of a plum one.”

“She would be more self-denying to go without, I think,” said Grace. “Then, selfishness might be turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to a little barefooted boy, wistfully looking through the pastry-cook’s window.”

“And improvidence, in thin boots, with no umbrella, picking her way through the rain, unable to pay for omnibus or cab.”

“Ideas flow apace,” said Miss Beau-

morice. And as if that little gratulation broke the spell, the flow was instantly checked.

“ Well, we seem to have nothing more to say,” observed Grace, presently. “ Miss Beaumorice, that was an unfortunate remark of yours.”

“ It was.”

“ How often it is so!” said Alice.

“ Alice! you extraordinary child! what can you be thinking of? Do you mean that Miss Beaumorice’s sayings are often unfortunate?”

“ No, but that when we congratulate ourselves on getting on famously, we often suddenly stop short.”

“ Yes, I have found it so sometimes,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“ Oh, so have I,” said Julia. “ Boasting is unlucky.”

“ Julia, papa would not like that. Besides, Miss Beaumorice was not boasting.”

“I am afraid it was akin to it,” said Miss Beaumorice. Then, after a pause, “How easily we find subjects to talk about, quite distinct from gossip about our neighbours.”

This remark had the same consequence as the former one; for she herself presently set the example of talking about neighbours.

“Do you know anything of Mrs. Caryl?”

“Oh! such a nice old lady! I wish she were in our parish, for you know, Longfield is rather too far off for us to see much of her, even if she were not lame.”

“Dear me, is she lame? I did not notice.”

“Oh, then you could not have seen her go about much.”

“No, I only saw her once, by her own fireside.”

“She is very lame indeed, sometimes. Her ankle gives way suddenly, and down she comes. It prevents her going out much.”

“Poor Mrs. Caryl ! it must be a trial to her. Nobody would think she had one, she is so cheerful.”

“Papa says her writing is a compensation to her. It must be, I am sure. She writes such pretty books.”

“I do not remember to have seen any of them.”

“Her *nom de plume* is Allegra. I dare say you would not think so much of them as we do, for they are hardly intended for grown-up people, though papa reads them always. He says there are so many unobtrusive morals in them. And they are very amusing ; grandmamma always reads them.”

“I always read them over and over

again," said Alice. " Seven or eight times."

" Well, I think Mrs. Caryl may be satisfied with her fame," said Miss Beaumorice.

" Oh, Miss Beaumorice ! But certainly she has a very fair share of it—of popularity and success that is ; for I suppose it is not so grand as fame. In fact, the reviewers take very little notice of her, and when they do, are not always very complimentary ; but she says cheerfully, that does not signify much as long as she pleases her paymasters and her readers."

" Truly, I think so !" said Miss Beaumorice, with energy. " I wish I could do as much and say as much."

" She would tell you how, if you asked her," said Grace. " She hates mysteries and secrets. She says the chief things are

to like your work, to know your work, and to stick to your work."

"That sounds very easy, without perhaps being so," said Miss Beaumorice.

"Yes," said Grace, "She took Caroline in training for a time, because there are so many of us, and papa's means are so limited, that it seemed it would be a good thing for one at least of us to be able to make money. Caroline did not want patience or energy; she never does in anything. But though she writes a beautiful hand, it proved that she only made herself nervous and feverish, without being able to write a good book; so papa then put a stop to it, and said she was first-rate as the manager of his motherless family, and his dear companion, and she had better be content with that, and with being his district visitor and almost curate, without trying to be what she was never intended to be."

“By the way,” said Miss Beaumorice, after a pause, “there is going to be a new curate at Longfield. Does your papa know him at all?”

“Mr. Brooke? Yes, he has dined with him at Dr. Garrow’s. He thought him a nice young man; perhaps rather viewy.”

“What do you mean by viewy?”

“Having crotchets of his own that he is bent on working out, whether adapted to people and circumstances or not. At least that is what I think papa meant. He did not think he had had much experience of village character, or took expediency and suitability sufficiently into consideration. Papa called him ‘rather young,’ but he is five-and-twenty. Papa thought he would become more practical when he married.”

“Yes,” said Miss Beaumorice, thoughtfully. “And he is going to marry a young

friend of mine—Miss Beaufort, whom you have seen.”

“Ah, the Miss Gambiers were right, then. They said he was engaged, and ever since that, they have taken no interest in him.”

“Julia,” said Grace, reprovingly.

“I am sure it is true. Just as if it could make a bit of difference in him.”

“Your papa thinks it *will* make a difference in him, for the better,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“Oh yes; only his being an amiable, pleasant man, remains the same. I remember Miss Beaufort. She stayed with you last spring, I think. She seemed a very nice, lively girl; and to know all about everything.”

“That is saying a great deal.”

“A great deal more than country persons do, or are supposed to do, at any rate; or to think she did. She *did* know

a great deal more than I did—than we do—about London affairs."

"Of course, just as you would know more of country affairs than she did."

"There is little enough to know about them, I think! They are so easy."

"I hope Mary will find them so. I am rather in anxiety on the subject."

"Dear me, what can there be so difficult?"

"Housekeeping will be new to her."

"She will only have to keep house for two."

"And two servants."

"Will she *begin* with two? I should have thought one enough."

"She has been used to many more, you see; so that at first, two will seem to her a small establishment."

"Of course, two will cost twice as much as one," said Alice.

"No," said Grace, "that does not follow,

unless they lead one another to be extravagant."

"I dare say Miss Beaufort—Mrs. Brooke—will find the butcher very tiresome. We find ours so."

"Yes; London tradespeople are more reliable, because there is so much competition, that if they do not please you, you can easily suit yourself elsewhere."

"That's papa's ring!" cried Julia, as the house-bell rang.

Mr. Nuneham came to take care of his daughters home, though it was still early. He came in time to secure a good chat with Miss Beaumorice first.

"You seem all very busy," said he, cheerfully, as he looked round.

"Oh, papa! Miss Beaumorice is letting us help her work for a fancy fair."

"Very kind of Miss Beaumorice."

"Very kind of your daughters," she interposed. "They have not only supplied

me with their ready, dexterous fingers, but with abundance of ideas."

"I hope these ideas may represent money's worth, since they have no money. What is the object?—a good one I am sure."

"An Italian Protestant orphanage."

"Excellent! I am sure some of the spare time you ladies generally have so much of may well be directed in so good a cause, to what Henry Vaughan of Crickhowel called 'the pious accomplishments of sacred industry,' by which even leisure is made to cast its tribute into the treasury."

"I am not so sure that ladies have always quite as much leisure as you suppose, though, papa," said Grace.

"Always? I said generally, and I think you three lasses may be included in that word. Caroline perhaps might not."

"And yet they are reckoning on her," said Miss Beaumorice, "to draw extra-

gance, emptying her purse at Lewis and Allonby's, and self-denial eating a plain bun."

"Ah, that's a rich idea. Let me see if I cannot cut Caroline out."

"Oh! do, papa, do!" cried Alice, giving him paper and a pencil. "You draw such capital caricatures!"

"If I draw a capital one now, it will be because such a capital idea is supplied me. Let me see, how am I to dress a fashionable young lady? Julia, put yourself in a good *pose*."

"*I'm* a fashionable young lady, am I?" said Julia, merrily. "I'm so glad you take up the fancy-fair, papa. I was not quite sure you would."

"Oh, I was sure he would," said Alice.

"Which knew me best, I wonder?" said Mr. Nuneham. "There is a great deal of nonsense mixed up with fancy-fairs, I be-

lieve; but since *you* are not going to hold stalls——”

“ What fun it would be, though,” said Alice, softly.

“ No, that I protest against; and Miss Beaumorice will get into my black books if she puts such a thing in your head.”

“ I certainly will not,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“ No, no; I am sure you will not. You know where discretion begins and ends.”

“ What a pleasant evening it has been,” thought Miss Beaumorice, when it was over. “ And all without the least fuss, fatigue, or excitement. People who are sociable may have plenty of society without expense, if they know how to set about it.”

She was not sleepy, and after clearing away the *débris* of the fancy-work, she opened her writing-case, and read again her discarded attempt at a magazine essay. It seemed better on re-perusal. Why was

this? It remained the same as at first, but she read it with fresh eyes, and in a different frame of mind. On the spur of the moment she set to work and finished it; was pleased with the achievement, thought “nothing venture, nothing have,” made it up into a little book-post parcel, then, with more deliberation, selected the publisher to whom to submit it, and finally addressed a few polite lines to him, requesting the favour of his attention to her manuscript. Next day she posted letter and parcel, and then turned her thoughts to other things, awaiting her fate.

Easter was now drawing near. Meanwhile, Mr. Nuneham was benefitting his flock by a course of Lent Lectures, on Separation from the World, which he maintained might be shown in refraining from what, even if lawful, we feel to be inexpedient—in refusing what is unlawful, even at the risk of the world’s laugh—and in

going on steadily in the right path, even while the world not only ridicules us, but tells us we are neglecting our duty.

“One of the tests,” he observed, “by which we may try ourselves, whether we are of the world or not, is ‘do we *desire* to do more than we can?’ Worldly people, little as they do, desire to do still less.”



CHAPTER X.

VISITS AND VISITORS.

“ Yet in her plenty, in her welcome free,
There was her guiding, nice frugality
That, in the festal as the frugal day
Had, in a different mode, an equal way.”

CRAEBBE.

MARY wrote to thank Miss Beaumorice for her trouble, and to beg her to engage Susan, adding that the disappointment in the other quarter was of no consequence, as a friend had helped her to a first-rate cook, whose only drawback was that her wages were to be rather too high. This seemed a bad beginning, Miss Beaumorice thought; and

she wondered whether by “first-rate” Mary meant first-rate good qualities, or that the cook had had a first-rate place.

Mary proceeded to say that she knew it would only be a compliment, and therefore no compliment at all, to ask dear Miss Beaumorice to come to her wedding, or else it would have given her such pleasure, &c., &c.

This took Miss Beaumorice aback. She had been thinking that Mary certainly would ask her, and contemplating, not exactly with chagrin, but with perplexity, the sacrifice of her bonnet and dress to the necessities of Rosina, and wondering whether she must buy them after all. Here was the expense saved!—but at another expense which she did not much relish—the expense of wounded feeling at an undeniable slight. Here had she been taking trouble for Mary, and laying out fully as much as she could afford in a pre-

sent for her, and here was her return! “Well, it is no great matter,” she thought presently. “Young people will be young people, and have their little preferences. Perhaps I’m too old, or not fashionable enough, or there may not be a corner for me at the breakfast-table, or—it does not signify—and the expense is saved.” Still the bloom had been a little brushed off the wedding. She thought it might now take its course without any unsolicited intervention, which might be construed into officiousness. She would pursue the even tenor of her way as if there were no such thing as a wedding in the world ; and when Mary came into the neighbourhood, be just as social or as independent of her as she seemed to wish.

“Though I am never very strong,” thought she, “I have enjoyed such good health lately as perhaps to forget how old I am growing,—really verging towards the

completion of half a century ! too old for wedding breakfasts and such nonsenses, except when relationships and old friendships are concerned."

But this had been an old friendship, so the best way was not to think about it ; only it *was* strange that Mary had never acknowledged her present. Perhaps she did not value it, any more than Mrs. Jay's.

The mystery was cleared up. The ink-stand had unfortunately been broken in packing, and the tradesman did not acquaint Miss Beaumorice with the fact till he could tell her at the same time that he had procured a counterpart of it from Paris, and despatched it to its destination. By the same post came a letter from Mary, warmly thanking her for her pretty present, which she assured her she should take into constant use, and pleading with her to make an exception in her favour with re-

gard to the breakfast, it would give her such pleasure.

But Miss Beaumorice said no with less effort this time ; her mind was decidedly made up that she did not want to go, and she wrote Mary an amusing, affectionate letter on the subject, which Mary perhaps was well pleased to receive. For she decidedly thought Miss Beaumorice old, and, as she said to Mrs. Beaufort, they had a sufficient number of old, and too old guests already, who would be affronted if left out, but who excluded many who were young, attractive, and entertaining.

The next notice, then, of the event, was the arrival of a little triangular box containing a good old-fashioned slice of wedding cake, and cards tied with silver twist ; both too grand, perhaps, for a young curate's wife ; but Mary had said, as much in earnest as in jest, she would as soon die as not be in style.

This was at Easter, and when Miss Partridge was spending a few days with Miss Beaumorice. The joint contributions for the fancy fair had been duly despatched, and a grateful letter of thanks received from Signora Bonomi, and Miss Partridge, who was going to rejoin her pupils in Cavendish Square, meant to chaperon them to the fair itself in the Hanover Square Rooms.

The three youngest Nunehams had again been asked to tea, and the female party were getting on so entirely to their satisfaction as to remind Miss Beaumorice of the name of a farce called, “Gentlemen, we can do without you”—when two gentlemen, blithe but dusty, walked in, who certainly did not find themselves unwelcome. These were Alured Ward and a friend—not the young man who had been plucked, but a steadier and more successful one, Ainslie by name—who were on a walking-tour together. They had bespoken beds at the

inn, but meantime were desirous to bestow their evening on Miss Beaumorice.

She was delighted to see them ; so was Miss Partridge, with whom Alured instantly renewed friendly relations, so that Mr. Ainslie had a double share of the cheerful hostess's attention ; and the Miss Nunehams were soon taking their full portion of pleasant, unconstrained talk, without either forwardness or shyness. Mr. Ainslie, who was good-looking and gentlemanlike, had a frankness and *bonhommie* that bespoke the good opinion of strangers, which was not usually withdrawn on better acquaintance. Without difficulty Miss Beaumorice soon placed these young people *en rapport*, having done which, she turned to see how Alured and Miss Partridge were getting on together. Miss Partridge was naturally imaginative ; and the matter-of-fact routine of her daily life made her the more gladly seize on any outlet from prosaic duties into

the realms of fancy. She was now questioning Alured about his father's old castle, which she said she had often tried to picture, and she begged him to give her some definite idea of it. Had it not once belonged to the Archbishop of Cologne ?

“ Oh, no,—that is to say, he tried to get it attached to the electoral fief, but his claim was not allowed by the imperial diet, and so it was adjudged to a Baron somebody, whose descendant eventually parted with it to an ancestor of my step-mother's for the ignoble consideration of thirty thousand florins.”

“ How one would like to live in such a fine old castle !”

“ Well, it's very good fun ; only one gets rather tired of it, especially when all the low grounds are under water, and one gets no books, newspapers, or cigars.”

“ I should not miss the last,” said Miss

Partridge, laughing. “I fear you don’t appreciate your advantages.”

“Perhaps not. On the whole I think more highly of Regent Street in the height of the London season.”

“That will soon be here, and I shall not be far from Regent Street, but I would exchange it for your old castle.”

“Well, if it were mine I should pull five-sixths of it down, and only keep a nice little hunting-box. What is a bachelor-fellow to do with thirty-six bedrooms?”

“Oh, but you won’t be a bachelor always.”

“Think what a lot of servants it would take to keep it up. My father doesn’t attempt it, I assure you. In ‘the annulled rooms’ the dust lies an inch thick. If the servants are told to clean them, they only give the floors a lick with a promise.”

“A promise of what?”

“A better cleaning some time or other.”

“Ah, they want a lady to look after them,” said Miss Partridge, regretfully. “Your father is certainly to be pitied.”

“Oh, *he* doesn’t care for the dust. He does care, though, for the loss of the poor countess, for she was very companionable, and he is very sociable.”

“Poor man.”

“Alured,” said Miss Beaumorice suddenly, “what has become of Countess Idalia?”

“Oh, poor Idalia! My father was so sorry she wasn’t a Catholic, because then, you know he could have put her into a convent; but being as she is, he has placed her at a Moravian school in the Black Forest for the present, though she *is* rather too old.”

“What a change! Does she like it?”

“Oh, yes. The music is first-rate, they are as kind as can be, and—there are no end of games.”

“What do you mean?” said Miss Partridge, laughing.

“Oh, little pleasure-excursions for two or three days sometimes, under the direction of Herr Inspector, little *fêtes* in the forest, potato feasts, strawberry feasts, bilberry feasts, and all sorts.”

“Hum—very attractive to children, doubtless; only——”

“Oh, there’s plenty of teaching, besides, —examinations and so forth. Oh, they’re not behind-hand.”

“Only you say she’s rather old——”

“Well, she’s eighteen.”

Miss Beaumorice laughed at Alured’s standard of *age*, and then turned to the Nuneham party. They were discussing with interest the intended progress of the walking tour, which Mr. Ainslie much wished should, even at the expense of a longish cut across country, include a visit to Penshurst.

“I want to see that famous old place,” said he, “and make acquaintance with Saccharissa’s Walk, and Sidney’s Oak, and Ben Jonson’s Mount.”

“There is a good account of it in Howitt’s ‘Remarkable Places,’ ” said Grace. “I suppose you have read it.”

“No, but I remember seeing an account in one of the old *Penny Magazines* a good while ago.”

“I can supply you with that if you like to run over it,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“Oh, do, please! I shall be so much obliged.”

“It is among the ‘Rambles from Railways,’ ” said Julia to Miss Beaumorice. “Shall I help you to find it?”

“Here it is,—in the volume for 1843.”

“I want to see with my own eyes,” said Mr. Ainslie. “The old banquet hall with its music-gallery and dais, and its fireplace in the centre of the hall, with no chimney,

of course,—how was it they were not all in a smother of smoke?"

"People were not so nice in those days as to mind a few smuts; and there was plenty of draught to carry the smoke off,—it escaped through the timber-arched roof, in which there was a 'lantern.'"

"People's eyes must have watered, though. But Ben Jonson did not mind it as long as nobody counted what he ate and drank, and while he had the same beef, bread, and wine that were served to Sir Henry Sidney."

"Here it all is," said Julia, quickly turning to the passage:—

"Here comes no guest but is allowed to eat
Without his fear, and of my lord's own meat,
Where the same beer and bread, and self-same wine
That is his lordship's also shall be mine."

"Yes, I should like to see the nice old place; not so much for that, though, as for a good many other things."

“ What would be your prime object, Miss Nuneham ??”

“ Well, first the oak, then the walk ; and the bell, and the picture-gallery, and Sir Philip Sidney’s sword.”

“ Don’t forget the church,” said Miss Beaumorice ; “ be sure you visit the church, Mr. Ainslie, where Dr. Hammond used to preach, and the parsonage where Dr. Hammond lived.”

“ I am ashamed to say, Miss Beaumorice, that to me Hammond is only a name, though an honoured one, of course.”

“ O fie !”

“ I don’t remember a single line he wrote, or a single thing he said. Do you ??”

“ Papa has his works,” said Julia.

“ That’s begging the question, Miss Julia ; have *you* read them ??”

“ No,—but Southey said if he were shut up in prison for life, with liberty to choose the works of twelve authors for his re-

creation, one of them should be Hammond."

"Still begging the question, Miss Julia. We have not Southey here to put to cross-examination whether *he* ever read Hammond's works, or only praised them."

"Why should he not?"

"Why, indeed? except that so many people praise books they have never read."

"Oh, not many, surely!"

"You have great faith, I see,—some people would say credulity."

"I don't know why they should. If you extend your circuit a very little you might see Hever Castle as well as Penshurst."

"Ah, I should like that. Anne Boleyn is one of my heroines."

"She is not one of mine," said Julia.

"Why not?"

"Oh, for contributing to the death of Sir Thomas More, for one thing."

“People were so unrelenting in those days.”

“And she was giddy and frivolous.”

“Could a frivolous woman have written such verses?”

“‘Deeds, not words,’ are what we should judge by.”

While this point and similar ones continued in debate, Miss Beaumorice heard from the other side snatches of such phrases as “direct commissions in the line,” “pass examinations,” “ordinary intelligence,” “bitter consequences of idling,” “thoroughness,” “smattering,” “no good doing things by halves,” “first-rate training,” “nothing worse than aimlessness.” Then, again, “Chiddingstone—Knowle Park. How far?—Oh, too far. Another time.” Then back again to “musketry instruction, position drill, platoon exercise, awfully dull old drill-book, colonel’s lecture, frightful bother, —you never knew such a row in your life.”

In the midst of the talk, in came Mr. Nuneham, who looked a little surprised at first, but immediately found his place, and was soon as animated as anybody. And the best of it was, that, in his hands, pointless talk became pointed, disjointed remarks became significant, one illustration capped another, well-timed questions brought out interesting answers, and, in fact, the talk became good conversation. No wonder that all seemed sorry when the evening could no longer be extended.

This was not one of the sociable gatherings that leave no mark. It was remembered with pleasure by all, and created interest thenceforth in each other's doings. Miss Partridge returned to her London duties all the brighter for her short holiday, and her pupils reaped the benefit of it in her sprightliness and good humour. They failed not to attend the fancy fair, and to

make many purchases, some of which found their way to Miss Beaumorice.

Readily would Miss Beaumorice have made herself useful in any way to Mary by preparing her new home for her return. But Mary had her own notions, and felt no wish that any preparation of the kind should be made for her. “The servants must be equal to their work, or they would not long keep their places.” Instead of Miss Beaumorice preparing for her, she meant to prepare for and astonish Miss Beaumorice, by the elegance of her surroundings when the first call was made.

So when the important day arrived Miss Beaumorice did indeed find Mary dressed to perfection in delicate lilac silk and fine lace, her hair even more beautifully dressed than usual, “with everything that pretty is,” in her miniature drawing-room. Margaret was sitting up with her to receive visitors, and looked full of pleasure and

importance. No one else had as yet called, so that there was ample leisure for Mary to do the honours of her new home, show all her pretty presents in detail, and expatiate on the delights of the tour in the Isle of Wight. Margaret seemed to hang on every word till the glimpse of a passing figure made her exclaim, in an energetic undertone, “Mary! Mrs. Garrow!” and Mary was instantly all manner and smiling self-possession as the Rector’s wife was announced. Mrs. Garrow was a comely, good-humoured-looking old lady: she took up a good deal of room in the little drawing-room, which soon, by the entrance of the two eldest Miss Nunehams, became almost too full; and when Mrs. Finch added to the visitors it was scarcely to be wondered at, though much to be deplored, that Mrs. Garrow, in backing her chair to make a little more space, caught the edge of an ivory pagoda in her lace shawl and

nearly pulled it to the ground. Only an agile spring of Margaret's saved it, and the lace was a little torn, and a fragment of ivory broken off, to the secret discomfiture of Mary, who affected to deplore her lace more than the pagoda, while Mrs. Garrow provoked her by the placidity with which she said,—

“Ah, yes, it's a pity ; but it might have been worse. The pagoda should have been on a larger console, you know.”

Just as if, Mary afterwards said, everybody would not have everything larger and better if they could.

But the accident was soon waived aside, and even the yap-yapping of Mrs. Finch's little lapdog, which Mary thought her very ill-bred to bring, was ignored, though she did *not* accept the offer of a puppy of the same breed, but said, with a sweet smile, she had an unfortunate antipathy to dogs. Cake and wine were introduced, the chit-

chat of the day just touched on, and another ring at the visitors' bell warned Miss Beaumorice to vacate her chair in favour of the new comer. Mary gave her an expressive look, and most tender pressure of the hand, and Margaret with alacrity accompanied her out, and said, "You have made such a short call, Miss Beaumorice ! I do hope you will soon call again, when we have not quite so many——"

"Oh, yes ! and I hope you will come and see me very soon, and very often."

"Do you mean me myself ? I shall like it so much ! I have always wanted to know more of you."

"Come whenever you like and can be spared, either with Mary or when she cannot make it convenient to come so far."

"Thank you, thank you ! I shall not mind the distance at all. I enjoy the country so much ! I seem never to have known real country before. What nice

girls those Miss Nunehams look ! I hope —*Must* you go ? *Good-bye !*”

When Mary and Margaret returned the visit, Miss Beaumorice was dividing hearts-ease roots in her front garden. She hastily pulled off her gardening glove to shake hands with Mary, who was in blue and white striped book-muslin, with delicate pale blue gloves, and looking blue too. She said,—

“ Dear Mary ! you are cold as ice ! This east wind has chilled you ! Do come in. You are too thinly clad for the season.”

“ Oh, it is the first of April, you know !” said Mary, smiling, but shivering.

“ Yes, but though the month is spring, the weather is winter—‘ blackthorn winter,’ people call it. Come in and sit by the fire.”

“ That sounds very inviting.”

“ Pride never feels pain,” said Margaret,

merrily. “Mary would as soon be out of the world as out of the fashion.”

“Her friends would not participate in the feeling for her,” said Miss Beaumorice. “And it is always colder in the country than in London. You are not acclimatized yet.”

“You looked so comfortable, sitting on your heels and gardening, when we came in,” said Margaret. “*You* did not look cold.”

“See how I am wrapped up, my dear. I was dividing heartseases, and have plenty for you if you would like some.”

“Yes, I should very much,” said Mary, “only——” glancing at her delicate French gloves.

“*I'll* carry them home for you, Mary,” said Margaret, “and plant them out for my pains.”

“Yes, do, there's a good child. The reward will be in harmony with the trouble.

What shall you do with them, though, when we get to Mrs. Garrow's?"

"Oh, I'll put them under the hedge."

"Somebody may carry them off."

"I'll carry them up to the house, and leave them by the scraper."

"Somebody will see you—Mrs. Garrow herself very likely."

"Mrs. Garrow will not think the worse of her," said Miss Beaumorice, "for she is a gardener herself. She sympathizes with other gardeners."

"Does she? That will not secure *me* her sympathy, though, for I know nothing of gardening."

"You have had no opportunity of learning; but now you will find it a nice resource."

"And you have a gardening apron and scissors," suggested Margaret, "and a rake and watering-pot."

"Yes, I shall use them all soon, I dare

say, when I have a little time. At present, I never have a moment. And I shall have to begin with the very alphabet."

"That is just what I should like to do," said Margaret, with animation. "I know nothing, and should like to learn something every day, if ever so little."

"That is the way to succeed, Margaret," said Miss Beaumorice, "in other things as well as gardening. And it is a nice time to begin—the beginning of the season."

"Miss Beaumorice, what should I do first?"

"Well, there are so many things. Gardeners will tell you it is the month for planting, pruning, grafting, preparing the ground in all sorts of ways; but it is too early for tender annuals or bedding plants, which would be more in your way,—hardy annuals you may sow if you like."

"Yes, I should like to sow some seeds

very much, if I thought they would come up."

"What is to hinder them?" said Mary.
"But there is no privacy in our garden.
It is dreadfully overlooked."

"If there were anybody to overlook,"
said Margaret, "but who is there?"

"When the leaves come fully out," said Miss Beaumorice, "you will find they make quite sufficient screen. Indeed, I have sometimes thought the house too much overshadowed."

"Oh, I love seclusion," said Mary. "A boundless contiguity of shade."

"There is nothing amounting to that, with a high-road just outside the gate."

"No, certainly. But I should like to be,—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

"Oh, Mary!" said Margaret, laughing.

"At present I cannot open the piano

without people looking in at me. When I have a leafy screen, it won't signify."

"People will hear you play and sing, all the same."

"Yes, but I shall not mind it, when I don't know it."

"Oh, what a pretty house!" said Margaret, looking about her as she entered. "Mary, I wish your hall and drawing-room were just this size."

"Of course; but it's no use wishing," said Mary, shortly; for she was not fond of her sister's prosaic way of viewing things. Conversation soon flowed in a channel more to her liking. She spoke of the rector and his wife *de haut en bas*, as "the Garrows," and said she did not think the old lady very refined. Mrs. Finch did not seem to have two ideas beyond her children. Luckily she and Mr. Brooke were sufficient for each other; for it seemed they should have no society, ex-

cept Miss Beaumorice and the Nunehams, who were sweet girls ! so unsophisticated ! Lastly, and to conclude, Miss Beaumorice undertook to send the heartseases.



CHAPTER XI.

A DINNER AT THE RECTORY.

“ ‘Tis sweet, ‘mid noise of plates and dishes,
To tell one’s sentiments and wishes.”

Boyle Farm.

WHEN Miss Beaumorice next called on Mary, she found Margaret prostrated in a very devotee-like posture on the carpet, with ink-bottle in one hand and camel’s hair pencil in the other. She started up, rather red in the face, and said,—

“ Oh, dear, Miss Beaumorice! I dare say you wonder what I am about. This pretty green carpet is only a tapestry carpet, and is wearing white, you see, at

the seams ; so I asked Mary if I should ink them over a little ; and she said I might, if I took care not to be caught. You have caught me, but you must not tell tales."

Miss Beaumorice laughed, and said she was upon honour.

"Some more cuttings and slips—Oh, how kind ! I shall so like putting them in. Mary," (to her sister who now came in) "see ! Miss Beaumorice has brought these nice slips."

"Oh, how kind !" And Mary gave her an affectionate kiss.

"May I put them in ?"

"Yes, by all means." And Margaret went off in great glee.

"Miss Beaumorice, we are going to dine at the rectory to-morrow," said Mary. "Not a long invitation, so I suppose it is not to be a formal affair. Mrs. Garrow sent me some diamond cement for the

pagoda. She seems quite a good soul ; what some people call ‘a good body.’ No need to dress much, I should think ; only one should show self-respect.”

“ Every one respects Mrs. Garrow,” said Miss Beaumorice. “ She is thoroughly unaffected and sensible ; well informed and right-judging in practical things ; well-connected, too, of a good old county family.”

“ Yes, yes, I know the style of person you mean,” said Mary. “ Good family and sterling qualities make up for a certain want of manner.”

“ Yet I don’t call her wanting in manner,” said Miss Beaumorice. “ She has no fine airs, I grant.”

“ And would never be taken for a fine lady. Oh, we mean the same thing. Such a Lady Bountiful must be a treasure in a parish, especially when she is the rector’s wife. Dr. Garrow, too, has a frank, fatherly way with him. John says some of his

church notions are dreadfully out of date—quite fossil remains — but he does not trouble *me* with them, you know. He said all manner of pretty and kind things to me, and really was quite gossippy with Margaret, so that I was afraid she would go too far."

"Oh, there was no fear. He loves young people."

"Yes, only she did run on so. The fact is, she is overjoyed at being here with us, and it has almost the effect of laughing gas on her."

"Very delightful to see and to be the cause of," said Miss Beaumorice.

"Oh, yes. We are own sisters, you know; it makes such a difference. I am excessively fond of Margaret. John wanted my first visitor to be *his* sister, but I could not hear of that, especially as I don't think I shall much like her, so I was very firm about it. Margaret is a darling girl, if she would but——"

Here Mary rather suddenly stopped short, for Margaret came in.

“I’ve just laid them on the borders,” said she, “for you to tell me whether they are in good places. Will you come and see?”

“By all means,” said Miss Beaumorice, rising; therefore Mary, who was going to say “not just now,” went too.

“How sweet the open air is!” said she, as soon as they entered the garden. “We have a double cherry, you see; and a good many lilacs.”

“And flags and peonies. I am fond of large flowers,” said Margaret.

“You vulgar child!”

“No, Mary; they look so well against a background of dark green leaves.”

“I am sorry to see you have stagnant water near you,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“ Dear, I rather like all that bright green stuff on it,” said Margaret.

“ So do ducks. But it is not very wholesome.”

After a good deal of desultory chat, Miss Beaumorice concluded her visit, saying she should expect an account of the dinner-party from them soon.

“ You may rely upon that, if you are not of the party.”

“ Oh, Mrs. Garrow knows I never dine out.”

“ I hope you will make an exception in favour of me.”

“ And then Mrs. Garrow would ask me to make an exception in favour of her. It is best to adhere to good rules, unless for some important reason. I dine early, as many people in the country do—especially mothers of families.”

“ Those are privileged persons,” said Mary, laughing; “ but as you are without

incumbrance I shall still hope we shall overcome your objections some day. At any rate, you must come in sometimes, and dine at our luncheon."

"Yes, perhaps I may."

The day after Mrs. Garrow's dinner, Mary and Margaret, true to their promise, called on Miss Beaumorice. They looked bright and brimful of intelligence.

"Here we are, Miss Beaumorice."

"Ah, I felt so sure of you, that I ordered the cloth to be laid for three, that you might lunch at my dinner."

"Did you really? There must have been some mysterious sympathy between us, for I told John to look out for a bachelor's lunch in case we did not return."

"Had I known you would have thus met me half-way, I would have ordered 'covers for four.'"

"Jacintha! put down three partridges for supper!" said Margaret, laughing.

“ Margaret, what *do* you mean ?”

“ Oh, only a bit of an old story about the Dean of Badajos.”

“ Well, I want to hear something fresher than that,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“ Oh, yes, you want to hear about the dinner,” said Mary, taking possession of the subject with celerity. “ It went off very nicely indeed—quite a family dinner, you know, that would have been thought nothing of in London—but still very nice. There actually was no fish, which I own I *was* surprised at. I should have thought Mrs. Garrow would have known it was *de règle*.”

“ Depend upon it she did, only she thought it not requisite for a plain dinner.”

“ Not requisite for a curate and a curate’s wife ? Was that in good taste ? Don’t you remember Dr. Johnson was hurt at a friend’s asking him to dinner, and then setting him down to a leg of veal ? He said,

‘Sir, it was a good dinner enough, but not a dinner to invite a man to.’”

“Well, he was rather touchy sometimes, especially when not quite well. I understand his feeling, however. He was a great diner out, and fond of good eating. But surely Mrs. Garrow did not set you down to a leg of veal ?”

“No, no !” said Margaret, laughing ; “it was a very nice dinner.”

“And everything cooked and served to perfection,” said Mary. “I own I envied her there.”

“So will your dinners be, I daresay, when Mr. Brooke is a church dignitary.”

“Oh, long before that, I hope. There was most excellent white soup, quite supporting, for I was very hungry ; and hashed calf’s head, and fore-quarter of lamb, stewed pigeons, boiled fowls, a small ham, and such excellent vegetables ! Mrs. Garrow always has her spinach boiled in three

waters, and lastly in milk, so that it is not the least strong. She said that was the way the French ex-royal family have it."

"And then the sweets were very nice," chimed in Margaret. "Compôte of apples, delicious, Miss Beaumorice! I wish I had the recipe for mamma. I think I'll ask Mrs. ——"

"Margaret! pray don't!"

"Well, Doctor Garrow, then! I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

"You really must not. I shall be afraid of taking you out again if you do such things. He would think you had never eaten a stewed apple before in your life."

"Ah, this wasn't a common stew," said Margaret, softly.

Miss Beaumorice was amused, and repeated with mock sentiment—

"There was a star—'twas not a common star,
For it was red—and shed a purple ray
That looked like—amber."

“Who made those nonsense-verses?” said Mary, laughing.

“That is more than I can tell you—perhaps the gentleman who repeated them to me. Well, but you have not told me——”

“The rest of the sweets,” pursued Margaret. “There was a curd star, with a whip——”

“First, a ratafia pudding,” said Mary, without attending to her; “a spring tart, almond cheesecakes, ramakins——”

“And the star.”

“*And the star.*”

“Well, and a very nice dinner,” said Miss Beaumorice; “but now I want to know who was there to eat it.”

“We sat down ten. Dr. and Mrs. Garrow, and ourselves, five; their married daughter, Mrs. Bligh, and her husband, seven; a Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, and a nephew of Dr. Garrow’s.”

“Ah, he has been very kind to that nephew, and sent him to college. Mr. Thorne is an old Cambridge chum of the doctor’s, Mr. Bligh is a chaplain to one of our great charities.”

“They all seemed of the same clique. John was hardly *au courant* among them at first, they had so many subjects in common, so many jokes and allusions familiar to one another; but Dr. Garrow tried to draw him in among them, too, and young Garrow fraternized with him pleasantly enough, only one was Oxford and the other Cambridge, you know. Dr. Garrow took me in, of course, and was very chatty and pleasant.”

“And who took you in, Margaret?”

“Oh, Mr. Garrow; and he was very nice, too, only I could not always be quite sure he was not making fun of me. He asked me the names of the books I had read, and asked me if I had read a great many that

I had not. He said he liked novels immensely."

"I don't like Mrs. Bligh," said Mary.
"Do you?"

"I have never seen her."

"She is large and not exactly good-looking, with very sharp eyes, and a sharp nose, and a sharp voice. I don't like sharp people. She listens to what you say as if she were ridiculing you."

"That is not at all like her mother."

"Oh, no; Mrs. Garrow seems as if she really took interest in me, and wished me to be fond of Longfield; and she talked to me a great deal about the parish, as if she supposed I should like to be useful in it. We had music in the evening. They asked me to sing, so I did, of course; and then Mrs. Thorne did, but she broke down. Mrs. Bligh played, but did not sing. Dr. Garrow asked me for sacred music, which, you know, is not my style; however, Mar-

garet and I sang 'Qual anelante.' And then he asked for something English, and I sang, 'Peace be around thee,' which is next to sacred, I think. And then John sang 'Three Fishers.'

"Well, I think you had a nice little concert. It must have been a pleasant evening."

"Yes, very. And now I shall begin to plan a little dinner in return."

"Oh, they will not expect it."

"Oh, but I shall have one whether they expect it or not. *I* shall have *fish*. Of course not white soup. I suppose I cannot have green peas. I must have gravy soup."

"How many will your room dine? Not ten surely?"

"No, only eight, I'm afraid; and even that will be a squeeze."

"Oh, surely fish will be enough without soup."

“ Well, we shall see. And then—it is a pity Mrs. Garrow has forestalled me in many things, because I cannot have them again—it would seem like imitation. A haunch of mutton, suppose? and boiled fowls?”

“ Yes, that would do nicely.”

“ And a tongue and curried rabbit. New potatoes, broccoli, and sea-kale. What a stupid place Longfield is, to have no shop like Crosse and Blackwell’s, where one can get bottled and preserved fruits of all sorts, and vanille and Presburg biscuits, and——”

“ Plover’s eggs, and *roe’s eggs*,” said Margaret, laughing.

“ Don’t be childish when I am talking seriously.”

“ I wonder when I shall be considered a woman grown,” said Margaret, in an under tone. “ I’ve done growing a long while.”

“ When you have a woman’s sense of your own deficiencies.”

“Are women always sensible of them?”

“Yes, to be sure. What think you of an orange pudding, Miss Beaumorice? and a rhubarb tart?”

“You must not have acids and sub-acids exclusively, for poor Dr. Garrow.”

“Oh, I suppose I must have a nursery pudding for him. Sweet maccaroni, suppose; orange sponge in one glass dish, blanc-mange in another, or else custard. That will be a nice little dinner, I think.”

“You must mind to have it on a fish day, if you are to have fish. We only are supplied twice a week.”

“So I find. What a stupid place! And perhaps that was why Mrs. Garrow had none. No doubt it was. I shall tell mamma to send me down some. That will be the best way.”

“If you don’t mind the expense.”

“Oh, one must not mind that for one’s

first party. If I did, it would always be remembered against me."

"Not against you, I think."

"Oh yes, it would. John would always remember it. And the Garrows would, and I should. I shall ask mamma ; and I dare say she will pay the carriage."

"Yes, I dare say she will, and she can send some of the other things too, you know, Mary," said Margaret. "The tongue and the fowls."

"Yes, that would not be a bad plan, I think," said Mary, with less confidence, however, than Margaret. "A tin of concentrated soup, perhaps, that would only require warming, though Hannah is a professed cook. John is fond of talking about

'Herbs and such like country messes,
Which neat-handed Phyllis dresses,'

but he likes good cookery for all that."

“Who does not?” said Miss Beaumorice.

“And, dear Miss Beaumorice, you must come to this party, please.”

“No, thank you. I have cogent reason for never going to parties. I shall prefer coming to you when you are alone.”

“What an obstinate person you are! Well then, who shall we have? Dr. and Mrs. Garrow, two; Mr. and Miss Nuneham, four; ourselves, seven—the eighth ought to be a great card.”

“Perhaps there is some one John would like to ask,” suggested Margaret.

“Well,—yes. I will tell him he must find somebody very bright and entertaining.”

“Mr. Crampton, perhaps—”

“Oh, *he* would never do us the honour.”

“Mr. Neate—”

“He would not come so far. Besides, he talks for effect so. He requires his ac-

customed listeners. And perhaps Dr. Garrow might not like him."

"No; perhaps not."

"We must leave it to John—reserving the privilege of objecting."

"It will be great fun—only a tremendous responsibility. I'm glad it devolves on *you*, Mary," said Margaret.

"Yes, I dare say you are. I shall have all the trouble, and you will have all the treat."

"Oh, not *all*. And it is what you used to have before you married."

"I beg your pardon. I always took a great deal off mamma's shoulders."

Thus they rambled on, till it was time to ramble home. Miss Beaumorice walked with them part of the way, taking them a short cut through some pretty fields. Just as they re-entered the high road, they encountered Mr. Brooke, who was coming to join them, and they were all very

glad they had not missed one another owing to their diverging into “Byepath Meadow.”



CHAPTER XII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

“How few think justly of the thinking few !
How many never think who think they do !”

JANE TAYLOR.

DR. GARROW'S carriage stood before the tall iron gate, and Mrs. Bligh in the drawing - room, ready dressed to step into it, was dipping into a book when she was joined by her mother.

“My dear Jane,” said Mrs. Garrow, who held a note in her hand, “here is a bit of a surprise. Mrs. Brooke has invited your father and me to dinner.”

“What! in that little room?” cried Mrs. Bligh.

“She cannot help that. It will only be ourselves, of course.”

“Does she say so, mamma?”

“Well, no; but she is limited for space, you know.”

“I should think so,” said Mrs. Bligh, smiling a little, “but perhaps she does not.”

“Oh, she must, my dear.”

“Depend on it, mamma, she is going to have a party.”

“How can she? It would be quite impossible—and unreasonable, at any rate.”

“Rely on it, she does not think it so. She is just the kind of person.”

“Well, I give her credit for more sense. Where’s your papa?”

“Here I am,” said Dr. Garrow, coming in, drawing on his gloves. “My dear, we must start, or Jane will lose her train.”

“I am quite ready, my dear,” said Mrs. Garrow, “and we can talk by the way.”

“Is there anything particular to talk about?”

“Yes; Mrs. Brooke has asked us to dinner.”

“Well, I shall be very happy to go, if I am disengaged. I can’t go to-morrow.”

“Oh, no! it is for next Tuesday.”

“Quite a long invitation,” said he, laughing, as he put his wife and daughter into the carriage and then followed them.

“Yes, and that makes it clear, papa, she is going to give a party,” said Mrs. Bligh.

“Oh, that is hardly likely, I should think. Curates’ wives don’t usually think it necessary.”

“Nor seemly.”

“The necessity of the case generally settles the question. I dare say she has

been accustomed to liberal housekeeping and thinks she is only doing what is expected of her," said Mrs. Garrow.

"And you set her the example, remember," said Dr. Garrow.

"My dear, mine was only common friendliness—common hospitality. Only a family dinner; not even fish."

"Ah! you will have fish on Tuesday, depend on it," said Mrs. Bligh, merrily.

"My dear, I hope not. If I thought so, I would drop in on the young creature and tell her that if we came she must make no difference."

"You would affront her outright. I don't believe she is so young as you think."

"Oh, she's not more than twenty or twenty one," said Dr. Garrow, "I believe she's of age. Brought up in a large family. My dear, you had better not tell her that; no doubt she knows what is proper."

She means to reciprocate a friendly attention, that's all: I'm pleased with it. I shall like to see that nice girl again."

"Yes, yes, I dare say she knows what is right," said Mrs. Garrow. "She has a mother, you know. Only a step-mother, though, I believe."

"Which makes a good deal of difference sometimes, mamma."

"Not always, though. Very likely we shall meet her father and mother, and that will be all, unless Miss Beaumorice. Yes, yes, that will be it."

"I shall rely on your sending me full particulars of the carte, and the company, mamma. Depend on it, there will be a squeeze."

"Nonsense; there will be no such thing. I've a better opinion of her. You are a little hard on her. A little inexperience she may very likely have—we can make allowance for that."

“And a few painful experiences will do her good ; I’m sure they will.”

“Ah, well, Jane, you were inexperienced enough yourself, when you married, about some things. I remember——”

“Oh, for pity’s sake,” said Mrs. Bligh, holding up her hands in laughing protest, “don’t enumerate all my old short-comings and delinquencies.”

“Yes, I shall, if you are unmerciful to poor, little, pretty Mrs. Brooke. I shall think you belong to the tribe of Sanballat the Horonite, if you mock her so. For my part, I always pity young things in difficulties, and if I see her in any I shall do my best to set her straight—as I set *you*, my dear, in your time.”

“That you did, mamma,” said Mrs. Bligh, kissing her heartily as she stepped out of the carriage. The train had just come up, so there was no time to lose ; but

she added, in an under-tone, “ mind you send me full particulars.”

From this time everything had reference, direct or indirect, to the dinner party. Everybody accepted, with exception of Mr. Brooke’s “ man,” who neither said yes nor no. Mary and Margaret were constantly on the *qui vive*, preparing or bespeaking one thing or another : and so many appeals were made by letter to Mrs. Beaufort, that she lost patience and said to her husband it would be a bad precedent if Mary looked to them for everything, every time she gave a little dinner. Mr. Beaufort took it more easily, and bade her not disturb herself—*he* would send fish and any little thing that Mary wanted for her first party.

So the fish was duly sent—a fine turbot, much larger than Mary had bespoken ; because it happened to be a cheap fish day ; and Mr. Beaufort took credit to himself for

sending her so handsome a turbot, and a fine lobster included ; crowning his kindness by making the fish a present.

Over to Miss Beaumorice came Margaret with a mixture of pleasure and perplexity in her face, to ask her if she could lend Mary a large fish kettle. “For papa has sent her such a splendid turbot that her kettle won’t hold it ; and I’ve brought a piece of string, the exact length of hers, to see if yours is any longer ; and the length of the turbot too.”

Miss Beaumorice’s kettle would just hold the turbot ; and she engaged to send it over in the baker’s cart.

“And oh, Miss Beaumorice, you were good enough to say something about raspberry jam. Would you be so very good as to give Mary a pot ? The orange sponge has proved a failure ; and she thinks if she whips up some cream with raspberry jam, it will do for the other glass dish. How

glad I shall be when it is all over! At first I thought it would be all pleasure; but there are so many little anxieties! And cook is out of temper to-day, so that we are afraid of upsetting her by the least word. Mary says it is very trying for two mistresses to be in one house, and she is determined cook shall not be *her* mistress, when once this dinner is over. On the whole, I think people who live in little houses should limit their guests to two or three. Mary says she thinks she shall after this time. I'm sure I can't think what the dinner will cost—it will swell her bills dreadfully. Mary is going to wear her stone-colour dress: she says that is quite dress enough for home. And I am to be in white, with a blue waist-band. If the rooms do not get too hot, I fancy it will be rather pleasant. I do wish you were coming, then I *know* it would be."

“ You must come and tell me all about it afterwards.”

“ Oh, I certainly will. Even if one plans a little entertainment ever so carefully, how difficult it is to provide against little unforeseen misfortunes ; and how difficult not to be too much vexed at them !”



CHAPTER XIII.

HERE A LITTLE, AND THERE A LITTLE.

“ To know
That which before us lies in daily life
Is the prime wisdom.”

MILTON. *Paradise Lost.*

THE day after the party, Margaret failed not to make her appearance. Miss Beaumorice saw at once by her face that all had not gone on well.

“ Mary is so sorry she cannot come, Miss Beaumorice !” she began. “ She is very poorly indeed to-day, so that she really is not equal to it.”

“ How sorry I am ! Has she caught cold ?”

“ I think she has, but she also has had a great deal of worry. Oh, Miss Beaumorice ! that unfortunate turbot ! Papa meant it so kindly, but it was such a pity he sent it. Cook spoilt it completely, and then laid the fault on the fish-kettle, and the fire, and on everything but her own carelessness ; and, when Mary spoke to her about it, (after everybody was gone, you know) she was dreadfully abusive, quite insulting, and said she never knew such a house, it was impossible to serve up a good dinner in it, for every requisite was wanting that a good cook was used to. And so she went on from one thing to another till Mary was quite angry ; and John was angry too, and desired cook to leave the room. She said she would leave the house too, if he liked, and so he said he thought she had better ; and she has gone away this morning, abusive to the last ; so that poor Mary has been quite upset, and could not help crying

a little. And John is vexed too ; but he went out, directly after he had paid cook's wages, and seen her leave the house. You may conceive what a state we are in."

" Well, Margaret, I am very sorry indeed for it, but very likely things will now take a turn for the better, and you will find yourselves much more comfortable than you have been yet."

" Do you really think so ?" said Margaret, anxiously. " Oh, I shall be so very glad if it proves so !—for all our sakes. It was such a sad thing, you know, for poor Mary and John to be in such a strait when they are scarcely out of their honeymoon. As Mary says, it rubs off all the romance so completely."

" I rather hope the romance is now to begin. You cannot say, my dear girl, there has been any real romance yet. I thought there was going to be some attempt at it

when I was shown the straw bonnet and the visiting basket and the gardening apron ; but you know, all the characteristic pleasures and duties of a young clergyman's wife have been set aside for dinner-parties, and morning visits, and so forth, which really have not an atom of romance in them."

" Why, no," said Margaret, slowly ; " only people must do what other people do."

" But, supposing that to be the rule, people do not give expensive dinners in this place. They cannot afford it ; they are not used to it ; and they do not desire it. Knowing them as well as I do, I think I have ground for saying that if Mary gets into the way of giving expensive little dinners, they will esteem her less, rather than more for it."

" Oh ! do you ? Mary had a notion

that, if she had but money for it, nothing would be more certain to make her popular than giving charming little dinners."

"No, that is not the road to popularity in a little place like this. Consider whether Mary would be more popular with Mrs. Finch, for instance, by having turbot when Mrs. Finch could only have soles. People are not fond of being outdone or outshone ; it requires a little magnanimity even to bear being so. People here, generally speaking, have no wealth ; those who possess it make no show ; they prefer living on equal terms with their neighbours ; and spending their surplus on nobler things than *recherché* dinners. They give generously, but unostentatiously, to the poor, to public charities, and to poor relations. In time of some great public distress—a potato famine, a cotton famine, a terrible fire, or shipwreck for instance,

people who make no show come down with much larger sums than you would think."

"That is very nice," said Margaret, her brown eyes kindling ; "it is really noble. I should like that sort of thing myself if I were rich enough."

"Which nobody would be if they spent up to the extent of their means on their tables," said Miss Beaumorice.

"Dr. Garrow——"

"Dr. Garrow lives in liberal style, it is true, but not nearly up to his income. He not only has a good living, but a good fortune of his own ; he has his greenhouse and forcing-house ; his carriage and fine horses ; but he spends at least as much again, I should say, on the poor and needy. Mrs. Garrow has her dairy, her aviary, but she makes nourishing dishes for the old and the sickly, superintends the schools, regularly visits the infirmary, trains young

girls in her kitchen, sends large bales of cast-off clothing to the Free Hospital ; and doubtless does many things of the same kind that her neighbours do not so much as guess at.”

“ That is just what I should like to do when I grow old,” said Margaret, thoughtfully.

“ To do it when you are old, you must begin when you are young ; Mrs. Garrow did, I can assure you. She was one of a numerous family ; her mother was a stirring woman, who made her and her sisters cut out and place all the family linen, and do a good deal of the sewing and stitching too. She used to make soups and jellies and nursery puddings with her own hands, and carry them herself, at her mother’s desire, to the sick. She used to read the Bible to them in their cottages, long before home missionaries and Scripture readers were invented.”

“Perhaps she rather despised Mary’s dinner, after all,” said Margaret.

“It is not her habit to despise; but I think she would have liked the dinner quite as well, perhaps better, if it had not given anything like as much expense and trouble. But we must all buy our experience, Margaret. That which has given us most pain is sometimes the cause of most good.”

“I think I shall try to become as good a housekeeper as ever I can,” said Margaret. “At home, I have not many—I may say *any* opportunities—for mamma does not like us to go into the kitchen. But while I am with Mary, I shall like to help her in everything she will let me.”

“That will be an excellent plan. Be careful not to be officious.”

“Oh, she would not like that! I must only be at her orders. Only, if I get into the way of doing things very well, she will

perhaps like it, because it will save her trouble. I think I must go now, for she told me not to stay long ; but she wanted you to know why she could not come out this morning, and she thought perhaps you would find her another servant.”

“I will bear her wish in mind,” said Miss Beaumorice. “In the meanwhile I think you will find Susan a handy girl. She was general servant to Mrs. Caryl, who is a very good mistress, and I was told she could cook very nicely.”

“She says herself that she does not mind cooking, if Mary will be satisfied with her,” said Margaret.

“Then why should not Mary be satisfied with her ?”

“Oh ! she does not much like having only one servant.”

“She might have Susan’s younger brother, a very nice lad, to go of errands and clean knives and shoes.”

"That would be a very good plan, I think," said Margaret, "if Mary did but think so too. We have a page at home, only he's always in mischief."

"Ah! boys will be boys; but boys are not all alike. James is a very good boy, and Susan is very fond of him. She will work twice as zealously for the pleasure of his company. And now, since you must go, I will walk with you and see how poor Mary is."

Mary proved to be "as well as could be expected," that is to say, after having got over her worry and got rid of her cook, and found an amusing magazine to read, she cast household cares to the wind, told Susan she had now a fine opportunity of showing how nice a dinner she could provide all by herself; and then settled herself on the little couch to enjoy her magazine. So that a pretty little pink and white shawl-handkerchief of Shetland wool

flung over her shoulders, and the back of her head, was the only sign or signal of her having anything the matter with her.

“Dear Miss Beaumorice, how kind!” she cried, starting up. “Of all persons in the world, I would soonest see you at this moment—indeed I told Susan to deny me to visitors—Margaret, I think Susan may want you in the kitchen—go to her, there’s a good girl, as soon as you can, and see if you can do anything.”

Margaret nodded, and ran off.

“And now,” said Mary, drawing Miss Beaumorice to her side on the couch, “we shall have a nice talk. I suppose Margaret told you how miserably the dinner went off?”

“She gave me very few details, except that the fish was spoilt.”

“Oh, all the better!”—with a relieved look. “I’ve done the handsome thing

now, and don't think I shall take the trouble again for a good while. It was expensive, too, of course, for the fowls cost more than I expected. The soup was burnt. That was cook's fault, of course—I should not have minded if the smell had not betrayed itself directly. John sent it away immediately. The fish was a dreadful blow to me; but I think I could have carried it off better if everybody had made believe not to see it (as well-bred people surely would have done). Instead of which, the Garrows expressed their pity for me just as if I had been a daughter of their own, and Mrs. Garrow said 'my dear, why should you have had fish for us? I had none when you came to me, and I thought you would have followed the lead, especially as there is so little fish to be had here.' So I said, 'oh, papa sent it from town;' but I had not meant to name that, you know."

Mary heaved a profound sigh, and then went on.

“Mr. Neate never came, and it was a good thing he did not, for he is dreadfully particular. To fill his vacant place, John asked Mr. Finch just at last, whom there was no occasion to ask at all, for he does not attend us. However, he and Mr. Nuneham got on together, and Mr. Nuneham was very pleasant. After dinner, I was quite thankful to get into the drawing-room, for the dining-room was dreadfully close, and too small for so many talkers. Then Mrs. Garrow settled down into what mamma would have called a regular confab, and kept my-dearing me, as if I were just out of the nursery. She seemed quite in her element, telling me what to do and what not to do; the sum total of which seemed to be, to spend as little as possible on my dinners, and to make soup for the poor. Had I foreseen

cook would give warning an hour after, she might have been really of use to me, by telling me of a good servant to supply her place."

"I am sure she would; but do you know, my dear Mary, I have thought of a little plan, which if you approve it, may conduce much to your comfort."

"Oh, do, please! I am quite at sea."

"If you are not bent on a professed cook—"

"Not at all; I can't bear one. The woman who has just left me was a cheat, I am persuaded; at any rate a humbug."

"If you give Susan fair play, you will very likely find she suits you much better."

"Yes; but then, it is so awkward to have only one servant in the house."

"Susan has a nice young brother—a well-grown lad about eleven—who keeps his hands clean, and tells the truth, and is

quick in going of errands, and always civil, and who would be a nice little page."

"Well, that seems a good idea," said Mary, brightening, "if he and Susan would agree, and if Susan would do all that he could not."

"She certainly would ; because she would even fill a single-handed place, and they are too fond of one another to disagree, and thoroughly respectable."

"I've heard it is a bad plan to take two out of one family."

"Oh, no, not if you choose them well. I have done so again and again, and it has always answered."

"Then I think I certainly will try it now," said Mary, brightly. "John" (to her husband, who looked in inquiringly to see if he might be admitted), "I'm going to turn over a new leaf. Miss Beau-morice has thought of a charming plan for us."

“I’m most happy to hear it,” said Mr. Brooke, coming in and shaking hands with her heartily.

“Miss Beaumorice thinks that instead of taking another professed cook, we might have a nice little page.”

“Professed cooks are professed nuisances, I think,” said he; “but are not boys almost as bad? Do they not break things, and forget things, and eat enormously? The only one I ever had experience of used continually to say, ‘Please sir, my boots is quite wore out.’”

“Oh, we must hope for better luck this time,” said Miss Beaumorice.

“And even boots,” said Mary, “are no worse than the quantities of things cook used always to be asking for,—butter for this, and wine for that, and half a pound of beef for every little drop of gravy.”

“Well, we can but try,” said Mr.

Brooke. “I’m quite agreeable if you are. Anything for a quiet life—even a whistling boy.”

“Oh, if he whistles he must be told to leave off. And Miss Beaumorice thinks she knows of a boy that will just do.”

“What wages is he to have?”

“I have no idea,” said Miss Beaumorice; “two shillings a week, perhaps.”

“That seems very little,” said Mary. “I think he might have five pounds a year.”

“That would be one and elevenpence a week,” said Miss Beaumorice, whereat they all laughed. Seeing Mary now in such excellent spirits, she said,—

“We must not reckon our chickens before they are hatched. I will go and ask Mrs. Caryl what she thinks of the boy before Susan’s expectations are raised, or she might be disappointed.”

“Yes, do,” said Mary; “it is very hard

on you, though, after such a long walk ; but I feel quite done up to-day."

"Oh, I don't mind it." And soon she was cheerfully on her way, Mr. Brooke accompanying her to the gate.

"You have done Mary a world of good," said he, heartily. "I was really taken quite aback this morning to see her cut up so."

"Oh, she will soon get on famously, I dare say. Everything is troublesome at first."

Arrived at Mrs. Caryl's, Miss Beaumorice immediately saw it was not a good day with the poor lady. She was sitting over the fire in a shawl, looking worn and harrassed. Her ancle had given way that morning and she had had a severe fall, and instead of any compassionate person stepping forward to help her up and comfort her, no one was in sight but a brutal carter driving a dray, who burst out laughing at

her. She was wounded at the indignity, and limped home as well as she could, leaving some errands unfulfilled which she wanted to execute ; and on reaching home and doing her best to solace herself with a cup of beef-tea and the newspaper, her enjoyment of the first was spoiled by the last, wherein was a critique on one of her little books, which was called slip-slop, and not even faithful in its historical details, as every child who had read a common history of England might know.

“ It is altogether a false aspersion,” said she, indignantly, after she had narrated her woes to Miss Beaumorice. “ I can give chapter and verse for every one of my details—not out of a common child’s history, certainly—but Sharon Turner’s.”

“ Which the reviewer probably did not refer to,” said Miss Beaumorice. “ Do show the passage to me, if not troubling

you too much. I should like to see it."

"Oh, it's no trouble," said Mrs. Caryl, brightening a little, and bestirring herself, though rather painfully, for the book. "I always take such pains to be correct, and then to be accused of incorrectness! I've a good mind to write to the editor about it."

"But possibly he will not take it up," said Miss Beaumorice. "People are never very fond of being obliged to confess they made a false allegation. Yes," said she, decidedly, after carefully collating the history with the little story in question, "it is clearly a false accusation, and though I think it by no means worth your taking up, yet, if you will allow me, I will write with great pleasure to the editor, and place the matter temperately before him."

"Will you? That is very kind!" said

Mrs. Caryl gladly. “I have done as much for a friend, myself; but never had a friend who offered to do so for me.”

“I will write at once,” said Miss Beau-morice, “under your own eye, and with the books to refer to; then I need not take them home.”

And soon her goodnatured pen was about to fly over the paper, when Mrs. Caryl arrested it, saying, “After all, nothing is so unpleasing as self-assertion, to say nothing of its generally being useless. So, with your leave, my dear, kind friend, we will trouble ourselves no more about it. Your sympathy has done me a world of good, and made me see the thing in less exaggerated proportions. Who will care about it one way or the other? I must have a very poor position and character if I cannot live it down.”

“But now, about your fall,—have you seriously sprained yourself?”

“No, I hope not ; only I’m a good deal shaken. It was the brutal laugh of that carman that chiefly upset me. In fact I have been nervous lately from having rather overwritten myself ; but it was to fulfil an engagement, to keep a promise, so that it was a matter of conscience. I have completed the task, I am happy to say, it is in the Row by this time ; and now ‘I may walk or I may run,’ like Ariel, if I will ; only you see I cannot run very far.”

And she laughed cheerfully.

“I want to ask you about a little boy,” said Miss Beaumorice. “Has not Susan Williams a nice little brother ?”

“Yes, a very good little fellow, in whom I am much interested. I wish I knew what to do with him.”

“Do you think he would suit Mrs. Brooke as a handy boy to be in the house, answer the door, clean knives and boots,

work in the garden, go on errands, wait at table, and be generally useful under his sister?"

"The very thing for him!" said Mrs. Caryl with animation. "Just such a place as he is fit for! If he is placed under Susan she will train him thoroughly. How could you think of such a nice place for him? I am so much obliged to you!"

"You think him thoroughly trustworthy, then?"

"Thoroughly—thoroughly."

"Would five pounds a year and his board and livery be enough?"

"Oh, ample, ample to begin with. He is very decently clothed already; and if he wants a few more handkerchiefs and socks I will thankfully supply them. How pleased his poor mother would have been to know there was a chance of his being in

service in the same family with his sister, who has always been like a second mother to him!"

Talking of this good, humble family, and dwelling in the prospect now opening on them had a wonderful effect in dispelling poor Mrs. Caryl's nervous depression. It exemplified what Florence Nightingale says in her "Notes on Nursing,"—that "a sick person does so enjoy hearing good news. . . . A sick person also intensely enjoys hearing of any *material* good; any positive or practical success of the right. . . . Tell him of one benevolent act which has really succeeded practically; it is like a day's health to him."

Miss Beaumorice had not indeed positively succeeded in securing James the place, but she was getting everything in train, and actually did succeed in it before the day was out, thereby contriving quite

a bright finale to her day's work. Having reported his character to Mary, she received authority to engage him as soon as she could. At that moment he was doing rough work for a small tradesman in Lambs-croft. Susan was delighted when she learnt that Jem was to be under her training, and to sleep in the loft. She promised to do her best to make him a very useful, well-behaved boy, and evidently thought him a first-rate exchange for the professed cook, who had always been depreciating country service.

When Miss Beaumorice reached home, she lost no time in sending Jessy for Jem, who came at a word, and beamed with smiles on hearing of the promotion in store for him. Miss Beaumorice did not lecture him on his duties, but she clearly explained to him what they were, and told him how pleased Susan was at the thought of having

him for her daily companion. He went away holding his head an inch higher than usual, with a smile nearly extending from ear to ear, and an impressive sense of the brilliant career opening before him.



CHAPTER XIV.

PETTY CONFIDENCES.

“When sanguine youth the plan of life surveys,
It does not calculate on rainy days.”

A FEW days afterwards Margaret called rather early, saying wistfully as she entered,

“I hope I don’t intrude?”

“How can such a thing possibly enter your head?” said Miss Beaumorice. “You never intrude. I am always glad to see you, come when you will.”

“That’s so nice,” said Margaret, gladly, “I found myself rather *de trop* at home this morning, and that made me fear I might be so here.”

“I’m not a young married couple,” said Miss Beaumorice, laughing, “only a single lady, with plenty of leisure. Mary and Mr. Brooke may have many things to talk over together now and then, which they can do best without a third person.”

“Yes, that’s just it,” said Margaret, “Only it never occurred to me at first. But lately Mary has two or three times given me little hints that my room would be preferable to my company, which I fear I was too stupid to take as quickly as I might. It was a pity, wasn’t it? It is so disagreeable to be in the way:”

“Very; but my dear girl, I don’t suppose you were much so; and whenever you even fancy you are, you have only to come over here—you will always be welcome.”

“Thank you, thank you, dear Miss Beaumorice; I certainly will, since you are so kind. Somehow I always reckon on

your kindness as if it were part of yourself, and never fear being in your way, though that is rather presuming, is it not?"

"Not at all; you know I am an old friend, and that I love you. Well, how does Jem get on?"

"Oh, capitally. What a nice boy he is! He makes us laugh so sometimes. He and Susan go on in such a funny way together. Susan keeps quite the upper hand, but he minds her very well. John has had him fitted with a suit that he will soon grow out of, but at present he is very spruce in it. Susan gets through the work so well that Mary finds she need hardly look after her at all; or if she wants a little help, I am sent to afford it, so that Mary says just what you said to me the other day, that the romance of her life is now beginning. For she goes out with John to take long walks to distant cottages, and comes back quite fresh."

“I am glad of that. And what do you do meanwhile?”

“Oh, sometimes I read a novel, and sometimes I go into the kitchen and get Susan to teach me how to cook. The first day she let me make an Oswego pudding all by myself, only standing by and telling me what to do; and when Mary said ‘This is the nicest pudding we have had yet,’ it was such fun to say, ‘I made it!’ At first she really would not believe it. And ever since that John says, ‘Well, Margaret, is this another of your wonderful puddings?’ and sometimes I say ‘Yes,’ sometimes ‘No,’ and sometimes I will not tell him whether or no.”

“Well, you have found a new source of happiness and usefulness. I shall be quite interested in the history of your puddings.”

“I shall not have time to make many more, for my month is nearly up. I do

wish Mary would ask me to stay a little longer. I would take great care not to be *de trop.*"

"Perhaps she will."

"I don't think it, because she has named several little things that she means to do after I am gone. She will have another visitor, I think John's sister ; but she does not seem to want her much. If she would have me a little longer that would keep Miss Brooke away."

"But perhaps Mr. Brooke is as fond of his sister as Mary is of you. It will not do, you know, for her to be selfish, now that she has his happiness to consider as well as her own."

"No, to be sure—I did not think of that ; only I can't help wishing."

"I dare say Mary will have you with her again in the course of the summer, especially as you are so useful."

"I do hope she will ! I like being here

so much ! Country life is much the happiest, I think. It is easiest to be good here. People seem to have so many pleasant little duties here that they never think of in town. Mrs. Garrow wishes Mary to visit the poor, and the schools, and to have a Sunday school class. Mary has promised, but I don't think she much likes it. Mrs. Garrow is going to take her round to the cottages with her some morning, and let her see how she gets on with the poor people."

"That is very kind of her."

"Yes, very. Miss Nuneham has a class, has she not ? and is a district visitor. She finds time for it, and yet she has a great deal more to do at home than Mary has, so I think Mary might manage it."

"Perhaps she will in time. People can't do everything at once."

"No, and Mary has never been used to this sort of thing. Nor have I, but I

think I should take to it more than she will."

"We shall see. I was going to call on the Misses Nuneham this morning. Will you like to go with me?"

"Oh, so much! How pleasant it must be for you to call on people just when you like, and to see just as much or as little of them as you like!"

"I cannot quite do that."

"But you can go out or stay at home when you like, get up and go to bed when you like, dress as you like, dine when you like, and order just what you like."

"Yes, I can do pretty nearly all that," said Miss Beaumorice, laughing, "though it does not go a great way towards making up my sum of happiness."

"Oh, I think it must! If you could not do what you liked in any one of those things, I think it would make a great difference to you."

“Yes, I suppose it would. You show me that I ought to be more thankful for small blessings. I *am* thankful for them already, but not enough. Perhaps I am in the habit of considering some of them smaller than they are.”

“Don’t you feel dull sometimes in the evenings?”

“No,” said Miss Beaumorice, laughing, “I cannot say that I do.”

“How nice! I am afraid I should. How is it that you do not?”

“O,” said she, still laughing, “I suppose it is because I have so many resources. I am very fond of reading, and I am fond of writing, and I am fond of working, for other people as well as myself. There is always something to be done, so that I really have not leisure to think of being dull.”

“I think your life must be very happy!”

“Well, it is; though I have my little

rubs, of course, occasionally. Now I will get ready to call on Miss Nuneham."

As they walked to the vicarage Margaret said, "I am very fond of reading,—almost as fond, I think, as you can be,—if the book is entertaining. But John says I read too many story-books, and, indeed, he thinks Mary does too. She does not mind him a bit, but goes on ordering down boxes of novels; but I am a little ashamed of doing what he does not like. Besides, I dare say he is right on the whole; but what am I to do? He says I had better have a course of reading. Now, what is a course of reading?"

"There are many courses, among which you might take your choice. Suppose you were very much interested in some one in India, you might read all the books you could get about India, and from the different accounts try to form a general view of the whole. This would be made more easy

and pleasant by taking short notes as you went along of what struck you, or what you feared to forget. The same with any other subject."

"That gives me a distinct idea," said Margaret, "which nobody else gave me before. I think I will try it, though I don't particularly care for India."

"Oh, I only named India for example. At one time I was very fond of reading about the religious wars of France, and read all the books I could about them."

"Was that an interesting subject?"

"Very; there were such interesting characters. I don't care for mere annals, if they do not concern good and grand characters. But there were many in those wars. Jeanne d'Albret and her good mother, and her brave though faulty son; Sully, Coligni, Montmorenci, Condé, and a great many others."

"My ideas of them are rather misty.

Suppose I were to read about them, what book should I begin with?"

"Well, I think Smedley's 'History of the Reformed Religion in France' would be as good as any. It is in three little volumes."

"That would suit me exactly, I think. I will put down the name."

"I will lend you the book when you go home, if you will engage to return it in a reasonable time. I do not like to lose sight of my books."

"Oh, I will promise faithfully——"

"And perform faithfully, I hope, which will be more to the purpose."

Margaret laughed and said she would. "Though we are rather a bad family for returning books," she added, "mamma has had to make good one or two sets that were lost. But I had nothing to do with it. Thank you, Miss Beaumorice, for giving me something to do when I go home.

Now that I have left school, I hardly know how to fill up my mornings; an hour or two of improving reading will give me self-respect, besides pleasing John."

"It will be very good indeed for you; and I hope you will now and then write to me of what particularly interests you."

"That I gladly will. I rather dislike letter-writing in general, because I have so little to say. What a pretty little blue flower this! Is it not forget-me-not?"

"Yes, that is one of its names. It is germander speedwell. Suppose we try how many different specimens of wild flowers we can collect before we reach the vicarage."

They found twenty-eight; and Margaret declared she would write down all their names as soon as she returned. The fear of forgetting them, and of the specimens withering before she could put them in water, made her impatient to reach home.

"When you have finished Smedley,"

said Miss Beaumorice, “ I will lend you Lacretelle’s ‘ Histoire de France pendant les Guerres de Religion.’ There are four volumes, in very easy and pretty French.”

“ Thank you,—that will be beginning ‘ the course.’ ”

“ You may have ‘ Davila, too, when you have returned the others; but perhaps you would hardly care to have it, though the Italian is very pure and good, and he is considered, on the whole, a fair writer.”

“ We shall see when the time comes,” said Margaret. “ At present it seems to me as if it would be quite grand to read books in English, French, and Italian, all on the same subject. But I won’t answer for my perseverance,” added she, laughing. “ And I know scarcely anything of Italian.”

“ Set to work with a dictionary, and find out every word you don’t know; you will soon find you require its aid very little.”

“ Well, I can but try.”

Miss Beaumorice had the pleasure of thinking that she started Margaret off with plenty of good purposes, whether they eventually bore fruit or not.

A few days afterwards Mary called on her.

“I know this is too early for visiting,” said she, “but can you spare time for a little talk with me, as you did for Margaret? I had a few such pleasant mornings, but I fear I shall have no more.”

“Why so?”

“Oh, so many things prevent. Mrs. Garrow bores me so much with her plans of usefulness. Surely I did not marry John in order to be converted into a district-visiting machine? Is it fair, do you think? All the bloom of my life is being rubbed off.”

“I do not think Mrs. Garrow can intend that.”

“But she is doing it, though, very effec-

tually," said Mary peevishly. "And I don't think I am cut out for that style of thing at all. My genius does not lie that way ; and I am sure my taste does not. I am not fond of talking with low people ; mamma expressly objected to it when I was a girl, so of course I cannot be expected to like it now. If John had told me I must submit to that kind of drudgery, I think I should have told him decidedly I could not yield to such conditions, — I really think I should !"

And Mary looked thoroughly out of temper, as well as out of heart about it. "I already go to cottages with him," said she, "though I do not always go in. Do tell me, Miss Beaumorice, what I am to do."

"I hardly know how to advise, because I do not know what you have been asked to do already."

"Oh, Mrs. Garrow has been so tiresome. She said in that 'good-body' way of hers,

‘My dear, I’ll take you round on Monday to the cottages,—just as if she was doing me the greatest favour. I hate her ‘my dearing’ me as she does,—it so completely removes me from my own level. I’m sure I heartily hoped it would rain on Monday, but it did not; and Margaret, you know, came over here, leaving me quite at Mrs. Garrow’s mercy. I thought it was a good opportunity of wearing my straw hat, at any rate, and she came for me early, and was very pleased to find me ready. The first cottage we went to was to see an old woman actually dying,—there is not a chance of her recovery. Her skin is the colour of old wash-leather, and her bones nearly come through it. Fancy how unpleasant! The room, too, was rather close, though the window was open a little. Well, she seemed to be a special pet of Mrs. Garrow’s. I thought she never would come away. She kept talking about the

old woman's soul, and the comfort of having made her peace, and her interest in the promises, and actually asked to be remembered in her prayers ! After that she read her a short psalm, and the old woman made quite a long speech, as well as her cough would let her ; and when we came away, Mrs. Garrow's face actually beamed as she said to me, ' What a privilege to visit such an old saint, my dear ! ' I thought it a privilege to come away.

" The next cottage," resumed Mary, presently, " belonged to a woman who supported herself by ironing, and who had a drunken husband. Mrs. Garrow wanted to know how he was going on, and the woman had a long story to tell. I didn't see why Protestants need confess these things, as if they were Catholics. The woman seemed to find it a relief ; for you see she was telling her husband's sins, not her own, which seemed to me a good deal

like tale-bearing. However, Mrs. Garrow spoke to her very plainly and sensibly, I must say, though I wondered how she could do it ; and the woman did not seem much to like it, but owned at length that Mrs. Garrow was right ; perhaps expecting to be the better for it. When we came away, Mrs. Garrow said, ‘ My dear, I was obliged to speak very faithfully to her.’ I did not think the woman at all a nice person.

“ Next we went to a young married woman with several children,—a slatternly dawdle, who is quite irreclaimable, I think. Mrs. Garrow spoke very warmly to her, and she stood folding her hands, with her head on one side, like a ninny. One of the children had scalded itself, and Mrs. Garrow told her it was all her fault, and gave her a good scolding. She dressed the child’s scald herself, and got me to assist ; it almost turned me sick. Another child had

an eruption on its face—‘humour,’ Mrs. Garrow called it—and it made me quite uncomfortable; but she said it was nothing infectious,—only the result of poor living and want of proper cleanliness. *That* might not prevent its being infectious, you know.

“Lastly, we went to see an old man and woman, quite past work, but the pictures of cleanliness, content, and comfort. They put me in mind of ‘John Anderson, my joe.’ Mrs. Garrow approved them so much that she seemed unable to tear herself away from them. I don’t think I ever saw her enjoy anything so much! And they seemed equally fond of her. The old man laid his shaking hand on her arm quite familiarly (though not disrespectfully), and his face beamed as he said, ‘What *I* say, ma’am, is, people don’t *test* the Lord enough. If you ax them, do they believe His promises? they say they do; but they don’t *test* ‘em.

They go on a grumbling and a grumbling, and a complaining and a complaining to anybody as will hear 'em, and they don't go to Him as has said, 'Come unto Me!'"

"That was very good," said Miss Beau-morice.

"Yes, but it was only a truism, you know, and to hear him say it, and to see Mrs. Garrow listen to it, nodding her head and looking so edified, you would have thought it a new discovery. When we came away, she looked full at me, in a rapture, and said, 'My dear, that old man is quite a lesson to me.'

"In short," pursued Mary, "I never was more glad than when I reached my own gate, and she would not come in. She only squeezed my hand with immense fervour, and said, 'You see, my dear, how easy it is to get at the hearts of these poor people, if you do but go the right way to work. I always feel it does me good ; which

I could not echo in sincerity. In short," said Mary, with an impatient sigh, "I feel it does not suit me at all, and it is no good being hypocritical. Besides, I don't like going into infectious cottages, or cottages that may be infected. I owe it to John not to catch anything, and I'm very susceptible."

Miss Beaumorice here offered her cake and wine, which she accepted very readily.

"Dear Mrs. Garrow," said Miss Beaumorice, smiling as she cut the cake, "you have quite interested me in her, you describe her so capitally. I could see her and hear her exactly."

"Well, of course she is a very good woman," said Mary, doubtfully, "but there is such a difference in our age and in the way we have been brought up. What is very well for an old lady at the fag end of life is hardly suitable for a girl in her honeymoon."

“No doubt her principle is, ‘Train up a young wife in the way she should go.’ I know she did so with her own daughter.”

“Yes, I dare say; but do you know that daughter is a perfect horror to me? There is no one I should so dislike to take after. So that does not strengthen your case,” said Mary, laughing. “John can’t bear her any more than I can. He says she is such a contrast to his sister. And, by-the-bye, Miss Beaumorice, I’m half afraid this piece of perfection will be another horror to me in a different style. I hope she may not be, for I must have her to stay as soon as Margaret leaves, and I don’t know when she will go.”

“When I came to live here,” said Miss Beaumorice, “my means being small, I was anxious to keep well within bounds; but as I was a stranger, it was a great treat to me to have an old friend to stay with me occasionally. This, of course, made a little

difference, though not much, in my house-keeping bills ; and I found it a good plan to have a visitor, say for ten days or a fortnight, and then be a week or ten days by myself before I invited another. This enabled my housekeeping to recover itself, and I think it was a good thing for my own mind too, and prevented my becoming too dependent on others.”

“ That was excellent,” said Mary, “ and I should like it very much.”

“ Why not try it, then ?”

“ I am afraid I cannot. John will expect Alicia to come directly Margaret goes, and I fear she will expect it too. A week will be the very outside of what I shall be able to manage.”

“ That will be something.”

“ Yes, and I can put it on prudential ground ; for really, since we are on the subject, it is almost necessary. In fact, it was one of the subjects I came over to

speak about. I have exceeded the mark, and the month's bills look rather frightful."

"If you paid by the week, you would find them less formidable."

"Oh, but how troublesome!"

"I say nothing about that, though the trouble is very little,—very much less than trouble of mind at being out of pocket. That would be 'a geometrical distribution of expenses which would diminish their weight.' "

"I believe you may be right there," said Mary, sighing, "but if I begin to-morrow, there are still this month's bills that must be paid; and it will be very ignoble to be obliged to tell John I have been unable to keep within my allowance."

"Yes."

"And I cannot ask the tradesmen to wait a little?"

"Certainly not. That would be a very

bad way to get into, and would only postpone your troubles."

"Then what *am* I to do?"

"I think you must ask Mr. Brooke to help you this time, and determine not to exceed bounds again."

"But how can I keep the tradesmen in check? When I order a joint weighing eight or nine pounds, the butcher sends me twelve or thirteen."

"Ah, they were very tiresome about that, I know. The only way I can sometimes find is to vary the surplus meat by new ways of serving it up."

"I do that; and Susan is really very helpful in expedients. That boy has such an appetite!"

"You don't suppose his chubby cheeks are kept on nothing, do you?"

"No," said Mary, laughing, "and he is a great deal cheaper than cook. He goes out sometimes before any of us are up, and

brings in ever so many mushrooms to stew with any bones or scraps he can get Susan to give him. His stews smell so tempting, that I told him he might as well bring *me* a few mushrooms, but he has not been able to find any more. I think he can imitate the note of every bird in the country ; he says he 'knows every man Jack of them ;' and sometimes you would really think we had a blackbird and nightingale in the house."

"Well," resumed she, after a short pause, "I think the best way will be to make a little sacrifice. The sum that hampers me so can be covered by four or five pounds ; and on my wedding-day papa put a little purse into my hand with ten new sovereigns in it. I can clear it off out of that, only certainly that is not the way I meant to spend it ! I had thought of so many pretty things !"

“ Depend on it they would not give you half the relief that this will.”

“ Perhaps not ; and then I need not trouble John. It is very tiresome, though. Thank you for helping me out of my difficulty.”

“ You are going to help yourself out of it, I think,” said Miss Beaumorice.

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